human rights abuses and violations against India's religious minorities

First Four Months of 2026

Documentation Report

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1. OVERVIEW

17 Muslims killed in India (January–April 2026)
- 4 killed by state actors
- 13 killed by Hindu extremist non-state actors

+1 suicide following violence by Hindu extremists

21 episodes of targeted communal violence against Muslims across 12 states (Jan – Apr 2026)
- Driven by Hindu religious processions
- Cow vigilantism, and
- localised disputes rapidly given a religious dimension

19+ episodes of punitive and/or arbitrary demolition of Muslim properties (Jan – Apr 2026)
- Estimated 2,300+ structures affected in reported incidents
- 12 episodes targeting religious structures
- 7 targeting other properties

The first four months of 2026 culminated in what is likely to be the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s most consequential provincial election victory in India since it ascended to power at the federal level in 2014. In early May, as electoral authorities announced the results for polls held in four states and one Union Territory, the BJP emerged triumphant in West Bengal; an opposition bastion it had never won in its 46-year history-crushing the incumbent to secure over two-thirds of the state assembly. In neighbouring Assam, the BJP's Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma—who had publicly declared that his job is to make Muslims "suffer"- was also returned to power with a resounding majority. The BJP and its allies will now directly rule. at the central and state level, over 78% of India's population, across 22 of 36 states and Union Territories.

The prelude to this staggering result—the period under review in this edition of the India Persecution Tracker, from January to April 2026—saw state actors continuing to deploy a long-documented and expanding repertoire of coercive practices against minorities, particularly Muslims, including by killing and maiming them in staged police "encounters", and torturing and detaining them en masse. At election rallies across poll-bound states, India's top political leadership—including Prime Minister Narendra Modi—continued to deploy dehumanising language against Muslims that did not merely incite hostility against them, but also worked to constitute them as a racialised outsider group: defined not by their conduct as individuals but by their descent, language, name, and habitation, and marked for identification, removal, and exclusion. As the Supreme Court watched on, India's electoral authorities oversaw a systematic purging of over 56 million individuals from electoral rolls nationwide, with exclusion rates highest in Muslim-majority districts in West Bengal.

Alongside, Muslim families across the country continued to have their homes, livelihoods, and places of worship bulldozed, their neighbourhoods rezoned into legally segregated enclaves, and their children's schools seized or shut down—while many continued to be physically forced across the border at gunpoint, expelled by their own country and denied the right to return. The electorate's resounding endorsement and rewarding of this programme of oppression signals its steady consolidation into something more permanent: a system of institutionalised domination, maintained through law, policy, and coercion—what international experts speaking to the situation in Assam, have concluded, constitutes apartheid.

The incidents documented in this edition, covering the period from 1 January to 30 April 2026, are not exhaustive—they represent only those *reported in the media and verified*, a fraction of the total given the fast-shrinking space for independent reporting in India. Yet the patterns they reveal are themselves significant. A brief overview of the key findings:

States ruled or controlled by the BJP —particularly Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Kashmir —continued to witness the most serious abuses by state actors, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture and ill-treatment. During the period, at least four Muslims were killed in incidents involving police, armed forces, or other state security personnel, including in staged 'encounter' shootings in Uttar Pradesh, a disputed army operation in Kashmir, and a custodial death in suspicious circumstances in Delhi. Authorities across multiple states continued to carry out widespread and arbitrary arrests of Muslims in numerous pretexts, while 'half encounter' shootings and custodial abuse by police continued in Uttar Pradesh despite recent rebukes from the state High Court and the United Nations, and border security personnel in Assam shot and critically injured two Bengali Muslim men.

Alongside, Manipur witnessed the return of inter-ethnic violence, with at least 15 fresh deaths, including of two children. See sections on: [Deprivation of Life — State Actors] [Arrests and Detentions] [Torture and Ill-Treatment — State Actors]

Hindu nationalist non-state actors continued to harass, intimidate, assault, and murder religious minorities across the country, particularly Muslims, with impunity. During the period, at least 13 Muslims were killed in religiously-motivated hate crimes by Hindu extremists across eight states. Communal mob violence targeting Muslims was reported in at least twelve states, driven by Hindu religious processions and localised triggers, while other individual hate crimes against Muslims were documented across 18 states. Christian communities also faced a sharp escalation in hostility. See sections on: [Deprivation of Life — Non-State Actors] [Torture and Ill-Treatment — Non-State Actors]

The nationwide campaign of persecution against Bengali-speaking Muslims continued to intensify across multiple fronts. India's electoral authorities purged over 56 million voters from rolls across 13 states through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), with Muslims disproportionately affected—accounting for 34% of deletions in West Bengal despite comprising 27% of the population, including as much as 95% of exclusions in some key constituencies. In Assam, elections were held on a "communally gerrymandered" constituency that had reduced muslim majority seats from approximately 30 to 20. in parallel the forced pushback expulsion of bengali -

speaking Muslims at gunpoint continued at scale, particularly from Assam, while new detention infrastructure was established in Mumbai and Delhi alone accounted for over 1,500 deportations in the past nine months. See sections on: [Disenfranchisement & Denationalisation] [Forced Expulsions & Refoulement]

Fuelling these abuses was the continuing escalation in hateful, anti-minority rhetoric by senior BJP leaders. During the 2026 campaign season, the BJP's use of hate speech reached industrial scale: a Bellingcat investigation found that nearly two in five official BJP social media posts in the Assam and West Bengal campaigns met the United Nations' definition of hate speech. India's top political leaders—Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Shah, and Chief Ministers Sarma and Adityanath—personally drove the dehumanisation of Muslims across dozens of campaign speeches, branding them as 'infiltrators' and calling for their identification, removal, and social exclusion. India's mainstream media continued to play a central role in amplifying and normalising anti-Muslim narratives—both through active platforming and conspicuous omission. Not one leader or outlet faced investigation, prosecution, or sanction of any kind. See section on: [Advocacy of Religious Hatred]

At the policy level, BJP-governed states continued to intensify the legal and administrative architecture of exclusion targeting Muslims. Two more states—Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh—enacted or significantly toughened anti-conversion laws, which are now systematically weaponised against Muslims and Christians across the country, while Gujarat became the second Indian state to pass a Uniform Civil Code overriding Muslim personal law. BJP-ruled state governments continued to carry out punitive demolitions and evictions targeting Muslim communities across multiple states, in defiance of Supreme Court directives mandating due process, while Rajasthan and Gujarat moved to legally entrench residential segregation of Muslims through new or expanded legislation restricting Muslim property ownership. An intensified crackdown on Muslim educational institutions saw approximately 4,000 madrassas placed under counter-terrorism scrutiny in Uttar Pradesh, nearly 300 schools seized in Jammu and Kashmir, and the abolition of Uttarakhand's Madrasa Board. See sections on: [Religious Freedom] [Discrimination in ESC Rights]

Indian authorities also continued to intensify their targeting of journalists and independent media, civil society organisations, academics, and other political dissenters. The government introduced a new bill empowering authorities to seize the assets of NGOs whose foreign-funding licences are cancelled—with retrospective effect—while Parliament passed legislation stripping transgender persons of their right to self-identification of gender. See section on: [Shrinking Civic Space & Democratic Backsliding]

None of this would be possible without the complicity of India's domestic institutions, which continued to fail to ensure effective remedy, protection of rights, or accountability for abuses—and in many cases, actively obstructed them. During the reporting period, courts acquitted dozens of accused in cases relating to previous episodes of targeted anti-Muslim violence—in each instance, citing the prosecution's failure to effectively present evidence. Even as some lower level judges delivered moments of institutional courage, their efforts were undermined in myriad ways, including executive defiance, and the increasing reluctance of the Supreme Court to engage meaningfully in contentious issues impacting minorities.

India's National Human Rights Commission—now the subject of an unprecedented downgrade recommendation by GANHRI—devoted institutional resources to investigate unfounded conspiracy theories demonising Muslims, while taking no action on any of the recurring abuse patterns noted above. See section on: [Lack of E ffective Remedy]

Some international actors, including UN bodies and experts, continued to raise alarm during the reporting period about the deteriorating situation in India:

•In a public statement, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regretted India's roll-back of transgender rights, warning that it would have "far-reaching impacts."

•Acting under its Early Warning & Urgent Action Procedure (EWUAP), the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) issued three letters to the Indian government: on the discriminatory targeting of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam; on the situation of tribal and forest-dwelling Indigenous Peoples in India; and on large-scale violations by security forces against Indigenous Adivasi Peoples in Chhattisgarh.

•UN Special Procedures mandate-holders made two joint public statements: The Special Rapporteurs on Torture and on Extrajudicial Killings condemned the practice of "encounter" and "half-encounter" shootings by police, particularly by forces in Uttar Pradesh, and against Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis; A group of 10 mandate-holders, including the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, drew attention to the prolonged detention of Sikh British national Jagtar Singh Johal, warning that it is a form of "psychological torture."

•The WGAD issued an Opinion concluding that the prolonged detention of Muslim student leader Umar Khalid—who was denied bail by the Supreme Court in January—is arbitrary.

•Special Rapporteurs also sent allegation letters to India on "encounter" and "half en counter shootings"; India's draconian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act; and on the roll-back of transgender rights.

•The United States Commission on Religious Freedom (USCIRF) reaffirmed its previous designation of India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), and called for targeted sanctions against the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (the BJP's parent organisation) as well as India's external intelligence agency.

•The Holocaust Memorial Museum's Early Warning Project ranked India as the country facing the fourth-highest risk of intrastate mass killing.

•Multiple international assessments of civic space published during the reporting period registered India's continued democratic decline. The V-Dem Democracy Report 2026 classified India as an "electoral autocracy"—a designation it has held since 2017—ranking it 105 out of 179 on the Liberal Democracy Index, down five places from the previous year. Freedom House's Freedom in the world 2026 scored

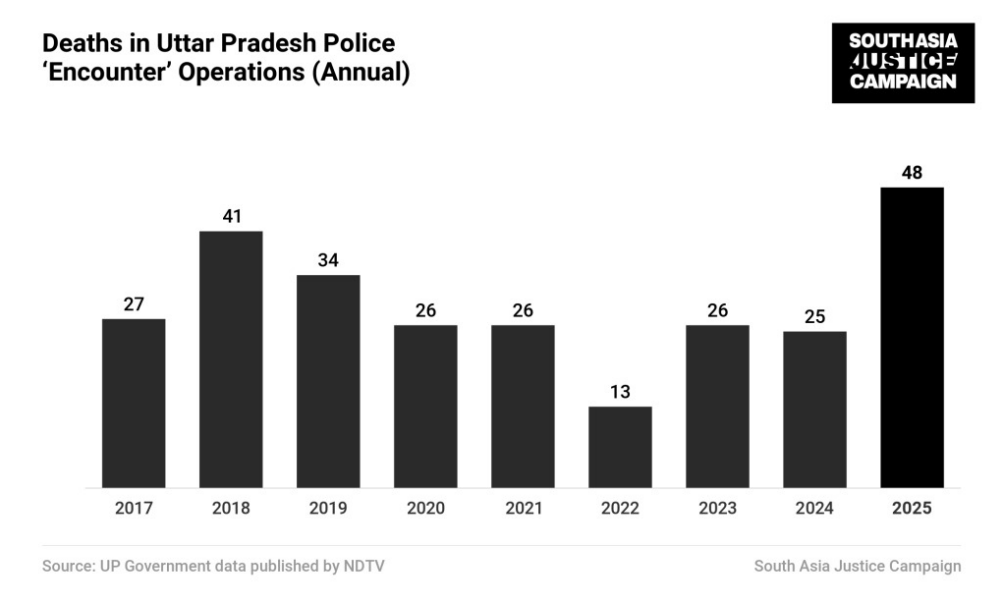
India 62 out of 100 (“Partly Free”), a 14-point decline since 2005. The Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index dropped India six places to 157 out of 180 in the “very serious” category. CIVICUS retained India’s “Repressed” rating (30/100).

The Panel of Independent International Experts to Examine Alleged Violations of International Law Against Muslims in India (PIIE)—a group of prominent jurists who among themselves have investigated and prosecuted human rights atrocities and international crimes in Myanmar, North Korea, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Sierra Leone—published a report on the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Assam. The Panel found reasonable grounds to believe that international crimes may have been committed in both states—among them persecution, torture, and deportation and forcible transfer of population, as crimes against humanity—with the pattern of conduct in Assam rising, in their assessment, to the level of apartheid. (SAJC provided research and secretariat assistance to the panel.)

2. DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

I. State Actors

During the period under review, Muslims continued to be killed by state actors in a range of contexts. In Uttar Pradesh, two Muslim brothers were killed in police "encounters" within 48 hours of each other, days after Chief Minister Adityanath publicly ordered "strict action" in the case that led to their pursuit. In Jammu & Kashmir, a Muslim man was killed by the Indian Army in a disputed "encounter". In Delhi, a Muslim man died in police custody amid allegations of torture.



Uttar Pradesh: Two Muslim brothers killed in Police "encounters" in Ghaziabad

1–3 March 2026 (Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh): Zeeshan (22) and Gulfam (35), two Muslim brothers from Amroha who worked as carpenters, were killed in separate police 'encounters' within 48 hours of each other. Both had been named as suspects in the stabbing of a local YouTuber on 26 February. Shortly before the killings, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had publicly ordered "strict action" in the case—widely understood in the context of Uttar Pradesh's policing as a directive for extrajudicial reprisal.

On the night of 1 March, police officers shot Zeeshan at a barricade in the Loni area. Police said he opened fire when signalled to stop; his motorcycle slipped and he fell. He was taken to hospital, where he died. Two police personnel were reported injured.

Less than 48 hours later, on the night of 3 March, Gulfam was shot at a police checkpoint in Indirapuram. Police said he opened fire when signalled to stop; a bullet reportedly struck the bulletproof jacket of a senior officer. Gulfam was admitted to hospital and declared dead during treatment.

Their father, Buniyad Ali, told reporters: 'If my sons committed a crime, they should have been arrested and taken to court. The court would have decided their punishment.'

In December 2025, Adityanath had issued yet another public warning directed at alleged criminals in the state: "Yamaraj [the Hindu god of death] will be waiting for you at the next crossroads, to cut your ticket to hell, and your path to hell is decided."

Since his BJP government assumed power in March 2017, state police have conducted over 16,000 "operations" involving the use of firearms, killing at least 266 people and injuring nearly 11,000. The policy—publicly championed by Adityanath as thok do ('knock them down') — resulted in at least 48 deaths in 2025 according to state government data, the highest annual toll under the current government. An analysis of official data up to September 2024, when the cumulative death toll stood at 207, showed that over 32 per cent of those killed were Muslim, despite Muslims constituting approximately 19 per cent of the state's population.

In February 2026, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions warned of 'systemic' policing failures in India, citing credible information of a 'pervasive pattern of excessive and often lethal use of force by police,' particularly in Uttar Pradesh. In a report released in March 2026, the Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE)—a group of prominent jurists who have investigated and prosecuted human rights atrocities and international crimes in Myanmar, North Korea, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Sierra Leone —found reasonable grounds to believe that the widespread and systematic practice of "half-encounter" maimings by Uttar Pradesh police may amount to torture as a crime against humanity, and that the broader pattern of abusive and punitive policing targeting Muslims in the state may amount to other inhumane acts as crimes against humanity.

Delhi: Muslim man dies in police custody,family alleges torture

20 April 2026 (Jahangirpuri, Delhi): Anish, a 34-year-old Muslim man and resident of Bhalswa Dairy, died in police custody after being picked up by patrolling officers in the early hours while en route to work at Azadpur Sabzi Mandi. He was taken to Jahangirpuri police station, where police said he complained of uneasiness and was shifted to Babu Jagjivan Ram Memorial Hospital, where he died during treatment. Police cited dehydration as the preliminary cause of death and said the medico-legal certificate showed no external injuries.

The victim's family disputed this account, alleging that Anish was beaten for several hours at the police station. "My son was completely fine when he left home. Police beat him to death," his mother said. The family also alleged that a friend detained alongside Anish had gone missing. Anish, who worked at the wholesale vegetable market, was survived by his wife and three young daughters and was the sole breadwinner. Inquest proceedings were initiated; the post-mortem report was awaited at the time of reporting. According to government data tabled in Parliament in March 2026, India recorded 170 custodial deaths in 2025-26 up to 15 March, with only one case of disciplinary action reported in the preceding five years.

Kashmir: Army kills 28 year old Muslim man in *encounter*

31 March – 1 April 2026 (Ganderbal, Jammu & Kashmir): Rashid Ahmad Mughal, a 28-year-old Muslim man from Chountwaliwar village in Ganderbal district, was killed by the Indian Army in an alleged 'encounter'—a colloquial term used to describe staged shootings by security forces, routinely justified as acts of self-defence or retaliatory force—in the Arahama forests on the intervening night of 31 March and 1 April.

The army's Chinar Corps claimed that a militant had been killed in a joint operation with the Jammu & Kashmir police, and that weapons and ammunition were recovered from the site. The army did not identify the person it had killed.

The victim's family denied any militant links, describing him as a commerce post-graduate who earned a living helping people file official documents. His brother alleged that the body bore signs of extensive mutilation, that the clothes on it did not match what the victim had been wearing when he left home, and that a photograph from the scene showed a combat belt placed over a pheran (traditional Kashmiri gown) in a manner inconsistent with how militants typically carry gear.

Police identified the deceased solely from identity papers found on the body; the J&K police issued no statement on the 'encounter', and no injuries to security personnel were reported. Mughal's body was buried in a graveyard in Kupwara district reserved for suspected militants—a practice under which security forces deny remains to families.

Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha ordered a magisterial inquiry. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah called for a transparent investigation. In 2025, at least eight Kashmiri Muslim civilians were killed by security forces in staged 'encounters' and other custodial settings, with families across cases alleging procedural violations, cover-ups, and a continuing pattern of impunity.

The cases highlighted above are illustrative of long-running patterns documented by the IPT, rather than an exhaustive account of state-actor killings of Muslims during the period. As noted above, government data tabled in parliament in March 2026 recorded 170 custodial deaths in the preceding year alone, with only one case of disciplinary action in five years.

In February 2026, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions warned of 'systemic' policing failures in India, citing credible information of a 'pervasive pattern of excessive and often lethal use of force by police', particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Assam, with Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis disproportionately affected.

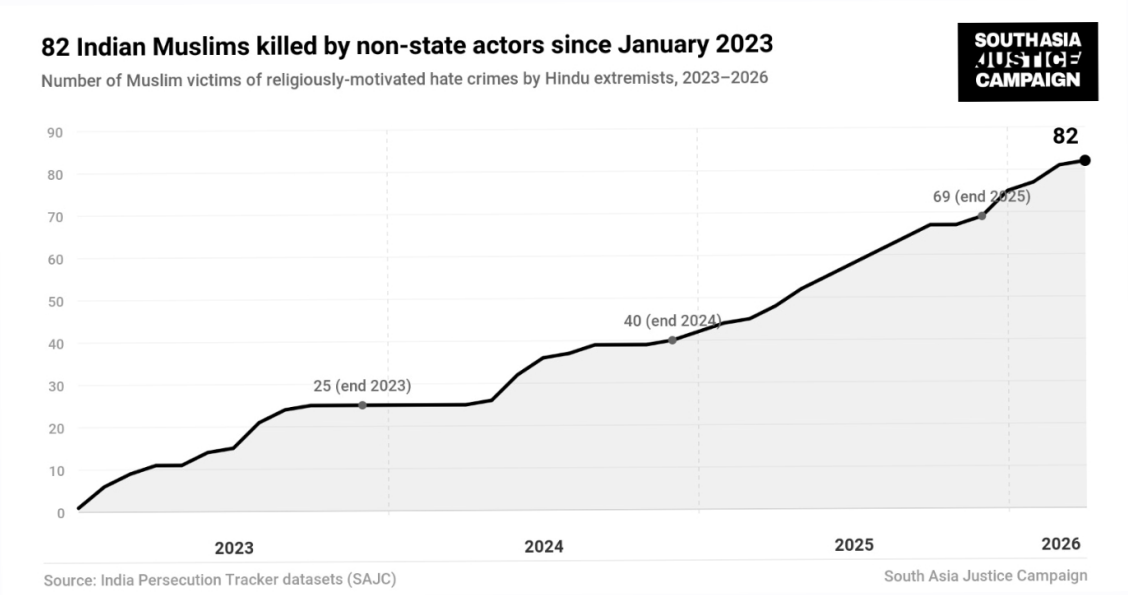
These latest cases raise serious concerns under international human rights law, particularly with respect to the right to life under Article 6 of the ICCPR and the State's duty to conduct prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations under Article 2(3), as elaborated in the Minnesota Protocol. In the Ganderbal case, -

the failure to identify the deceased, the denial of remains to the family, and the reported shifting of the responsible unit point to the continuing pattern of impunity for security forces operating in Jammu & Kashmir documented in successive editions of the IPT. India's obligations under the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials remain largely unmet.

In 2025, the IPT documented the killings of at least 23 Muslims in incidents involving police, armed forces, or other state security personnel—up from 21 in 2024 and 20 in 2023.

II. Non-State Actors

During the period under review, at least 13 Muslims—including two women, a 15-year-old boy, and a 65-year-old man—were killed by Hindu extremist non-state actors in religiously-motivated hate crimes across eight states. One further death, a suicide by the wife of a lynching victim, was directly linked to the violence documented below. The contexts included cow vigilantism, suspicion of being 'Bangladeshi', an interfaith relationship, and localised disputes that escalated along communal lines. Bihar recorded the highest number of fatalities (4 killings and 1 related suicide), followed by Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh (2 each).



Bihar: 15-year-old Adivasi Muslim boy beaten to death after bike dispute in Katihar

26 January 2026 (Katihar, Bihar): Mohammad Manzar Rai, a 15-year-old Adivasi Muslim boy, was beaten to death by a mob in the Hapla area of Katihar district after a minor argument following a bike collision.

The assault left him critically injured; he died during treatment. An FIR was registered at Chitabari police station naming six accused. Two men were arrested; raids were reportedly underway for the others at the time of reporting.

Bihar: Muslim woman dies after being tied to pole and beaten by mob at village head's residence in Madhubani

28 February 2026 (Madhubani, Bihar): Roshan Khatoon, a Muslim woman from Amhi village in Madhubani's Ghoghardiha block, died on 1 March after being brutally assaulted by a mob when she approached the local village head to seek help resolving a dispute.

According to witnesses, Khatoon was tied to a pole and beaten severely by a group led by the village head's son. She was observing a Ramadan fast at the time of the assault. Local reports alleged that when she asked for water, she was instead forced to drink a mixture of alcohol and urine; police said they could not confirm these details at the time of writing. Khatoon was taken to Patna Medical College and Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries. An FIR was registered against 17 accused, and the village head's son was detained.

Bihar: 65-year-old Muslim man beaten to death after objecting to anti-Muslim remarks during dispute in Darbhanga

1 March 2026 (Darbhanga, Bihar): Abdul Salam, a 65-year-old Muslim man, was beaten to death in Jhagarua village after he objected to anti-Muslim remarks being made during an unrelated local dispute.

According to witnesses, a dispute over alleged brick theft had escalated, during which a woman began directing abusive and communally charged language against the Muslim community. Salam, who was passing by on his way to his shop, intervened and asked those involved to address their grievance with the individual responsible rather than targeting an entire community. He was then struck on the head with a khanti (an iron digging tool) by the woman's son and collapsed on the road. He was taken to a local health centre, where he was declared dead. Four members of the accused family were arrested. The accused had initially claimed that members of the Muslim community had attacked their house; police investigation contradicted this account.

Bihar: Muslim man lynched in Rohtas; wife dies by suicide with two children after receiving threats from accused

24 March 2026 (Rohtas, Bihar): Hasan Raza Khan, a 32-year-old Muslim man, was lynched in Muradabad village in BJP-governed Bihar. Six days later, his wife, Reshma Khatoon, consumed poison along with their two children—four-year-old Taiyba and one-and-a-half-year-old Hamza. Reshma Khatoon died; the two children remained in critical condition at the time of reporting.

Khan was reportedly lynched by a mob over a land dispute on a state highway. According to reports, the attackers tied his hands and legs, dragged him along the highway, and beat him to death in public view. The assault was recorded on video and widely circulated on social media. Eight individuals were named as accused. As of early April, four had been arrested; arrest warrants had been obtained for the remaining four. Family members alleged that they had been living in constant fear and receiving threats from the accused still at large. The person who recorded the video of the lynching had also reportedly been threatened.

Uttar Pradesh: Muslim man and Hindu partner hacked to death by her brothers in 'honour killing' in Moradabad

18 January 2026 (Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh): Arman, a Muslim man, and Kajal, a Hindu woman, were hacked to death and buried in a shallow grave near a riverbank in Umri Sabzipur village. The couple had been in a relationship for approximately two years.

According to police, Kajal's brothers attacked the couple with a spade after discovering them together on the night of 18 January. During interrogation, the accused stated: 'We are followers of the Hindu religion and were deeply hurt.' The brothers confessed to killing both victims and burying the bodies near a riverbank on the outskirts of the village.

Arman's family searched for him for three days. His father told Maktoob Media that police took no immediate action on their initial missing-person complaint; a formal investigation began only after he submitted a written complaint to the Senior Superintendent of Police on 21 January. Two of Kajal's brothers were arrested and charged with murder; a third was named in the FIR but remained at large. Provincial Armed Constabulary personnel were deployed in the village to prevent communal tension.

Uttar Pradesh: 60-year-old Muslim man shot dead in Ghazipur after Holi dispute; family alleges custodial abuse and police bias

8 March 2026 (Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh): Aas Muhammad, a 60-year-old Muslim man, was shot dead in Chadipur village under Karanda police station in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh.

The killing followed a dispute that began on Holi (4 March), when children from Aas Muhammad's family and those of a Hindu neighbour clashed over the application of colours. The altercation escalated, with both sides exchanging blows and stones. A police complaint was registered, and both Aas Muhammad and his son were arrested. Aas Muhammad's son alleged that the accused had a history of provoking their family, particularly targeting his brother's children.

The family alleged that police accepted bribes from the opposing side, detained Aas Muhammad rather than the accused, and beat him in custody. Relatives said he had visible injuries upon release. The accused, meanwhile, were reportedly released.

On the morning of 8 March, shortly after Aas Muhammad's release, a group including the accused Pinkal Pandey, several associates, and the village head arrived at his home. According to the FIR, Pandey shot him with a licensed firearm at approximately 9:30 am. Aas Muhammad was taken to the Karanda Primary Health Centre and declared dead on arrival. Aas Muhammad is survived by his wife and seven children. Police said a case had been registered and that those involved had been taken into custody for questioning.

Jharkhand: Muslim man beaten to death by mob over cattle theft accusation

7–8 January 2026 (Godda, Jharkhand): Pappu Ansari, a 45-year-old Muslim man from Ranipur village, was beaten to death by a mob in Matihani village on the intervening night of 7 and 8 January after being accused of cattle theft.

His family alleged that Ansari was stripped, identified as Muslim, and then attacked with axes, sticks, arrows and a chisel, describing the killing as motivated by religious hatred.

Police said villagers had raised an alarm after seeing men driving cattle from a cowshed, and noted that the victim had prior cases related to cattle theft. Two persons were arrested. Ansari was survived by five children.

Jharkhand: Bengali-origin Muslim migrant worker found dead after alleged assault

15 January 2026 (Jharkhand): Alauddin Sheikh, a 37-year-old Bengali-origin Muslim migrant worker from Beldanga in West Bengal's Murshidabad district, was found dead in his accommodation in Jharkhand, where he worked as a hawker.

Police reported the death as a suspected suicide by hanging. His family disputed this account, alleging that Sheikh had been beaten to death by locals and his body staged to appear as a suicide.

According to his mother, Sheikh had called her the previous day and told her he 'could not leave the room and was very scared.' A villager told reporters that locals had demanded to see Sheikh's identity documents, and upon seeing his Murshidabad address, 'he was beaten to death.'

Sheikh's death triggered large-scale protests in Murshidabad, including a blockade of the national highway and disruptions to rail services. At least 30 people were arrested in connection with the unrest.

The case is part of an escalating pattern of violence against Bengali-speaking Muslim migrant workers, who are routinely targeted after being branded 'Bangladeshis' and 'illegal immigrants'. A local advocacy group said at least 14 migrant workers from Murshidabad had died in other states since December 2025, in various circumstances. In 2025, the IPT documented the killings of at least five people—four Muslims and one Dalit—who were murdered by Hindu extremist groups after being accused of being 'Bangladeshis'.

Odisha: Muslim man lynched by cow vigilantes linked to Bajrang Dal in Balasore; forced to chant Hindu religious slogans before death

14 January 2026 (Balasore, Odisha): Sheikh Makandar Mohammad, a 35-year-old Muslim man, was beaten to death by a group of self-styled cow vigilantes (gau rakshaks — Hindu nationalist self-styled cow protectors) after the van he was travelling in was intercepted while transporting cattle.

Mohammad, a mason by profession, had agreed to help a local van driver transport cattle on the Hindu festival day of Makar Sankranti. The van was ambushed on the outskirts of Balasore town in the early hours of the morning. The attackers beat Mohammad with sticks and rods and forced him to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' ('Hail Lord Ram') and 'Gau Mata ki Jai' ('Hail the Mother Cow'). Video footage of the assault circulated online.

Mohammad was taken to Balasore district hospital, where he died during treatment. According to his family, he named his attackers from his hospital bed before he died. The attackers were known to him.

One of the accused was identified as the head of the cow protection squad of the Bajrang Dal (a Hindu extremist organisation affiliated to the ruling BJP) in Balasore. Five men were detained and three were arrested and charged with murder. The Bajrang Dal publicly protested the detentions, claiming its members had been implicated 'without evidence.'

The initial police FIR did not mention the assault at all, instead booking the van's driver and owner under Odisha's cow slaughter prevention law. A murder case was registered only after the victim's family filed a separate complaint. In 2025, the IPT documented at least five killings of Muslims by members of cow vigilante groups across India. Odisha's Chief Minister told the state assembly in March 2026 that seven mob lynchings had been reported in the state since the BJP formed its first government in June 2024; state police data indicated an average of 20 cow-related violence incidents per month since mid-2025.

Andhra Pradesh: Bengall-origin Muslim migrant worker allegedly killed in Prakasam after being accused of being 'Bangladeshi'

24 January 2026 (Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh): Manjur Alam Laskar, a Bengali-origin Muslim migrant worker from South 24-Parganas in West Bengal, was allegedly beaten to death in the Komarolu area of Prakasam district, where he had worked in an embroidery factory for nearly a decade.

Laskar's family received a call from an unknown number demanding ₹25,000 for his release. His wife transferred ₹6,000 via UPI. The following day, the caller informed the family that Laskar was dead. His brother, a local panchayat vice-president, alleged that Laskar was targeted 'on suspicion of being Bangladeshi because he was a Bengali-speaking Muslim.' No arrests were reported at the time of writing.

Delhi: Muslim man shot dead in Nand Nagri after rushing to rescue teenage son from mob assault

17 February 2026 (Nand Nagri, Delhi): Mohammad Umardeen, a Muslim man, was shot dead in northeast Delhi's Nand Nagri area after he rushed to rescue his 15-year-old son from a mob assault.

Umardeen's son, Tehzeem, was returning from tuition when he was surrounded and attacked by a group of men. According to Tehzeem, the attackers identified him as Muslim, used anti-Muslim slurs, beat him, and tore his clothes off. He called his father for help.

Umardeen and his wife rushed to the spot. When Umardeen confronted the attackers, one of them drew a pistol and shot him in the chest. He was taken to Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. The shooter was arrested and charged with murder. However, the other members of the mob who had attacked Tehzeem were not arrested or charged, despite the FIR invoking a joint-liability provision.

Rajasthan: 28-year-old Muslim truck driver shot dead by suspected cow vigilantes near Bhiwadi

2 March 2026 (Bhiwadi, Rajasthan): Aamir, a 28-year-old Muslim truck driver from Palwal district in Haryana, was shot dead in the early hours near Sare Kala village in BJP-ruled Rajasthan.

According to his family, Aamir had loaded fruits into his pickup truck and was preparing to leave for Delhi's Azadpur wholesale market. His uncle alleged that a group of men associated with the Bajrang Dal, travelling in a convoy of vehicles, deliberately rammed into his truck and shot him in the head without exchanging a word.

Police offered a different account. The Deputy Superintendent of Police said officers received information about a pickup truck carrying cattle being chased by a group of people, and that a confrontation involving stone-pelting broke out near Sare Kala village. Five cattle were recovered from a vehicle near the scene. Police initially suggested Aamir's death may have resulted from stone-pelting rather than a shooting.

However, the post-mortem examination confirmed that a bullet was recovered from his head. A case was registered under BNS sections 103(1) (murder), 3(5) (common intention), and 125 (endangering life) at Chopanki police station against unidentified individuals and members of the Bajrang Dal.

As of mid-March 2026—14 days after the killing—no arrests had been made. The family submitted a handwritten complaint naming several accused, but the names had not been added to the FIR. The Superintendent of Police acknowledged that Aamir had no prior criminal record related to cattle smuggling.

Aamir had worked as a truck driver for approximately a decade and was the sole breadwinner for his family. He is survived by a two-year-old daughter and a pregnant wife. His killing near Bhiwadi adds to a pattern of cow vigilante violence in and around Rajasthan's Alwar district, where dairy farmer Pehlu Khan was beaten to death in 2017 and Rakbar Khan was lynched in 2018. In 2025, the IPT documented nine Muslims killed in violence linked to cow vigilante groups.

West Bengal: 30-year-old Muslim woman set on fire and killed in Kolkata after rejecting Hindu man's marriage proposal

In Kolkata, a 30-year-old Muslim woman died after being set on fire allegedly by a man whose marriage proposal she had rejected. The accused, identified as Siddhartha Chariwal, was arrested shortly after the victim gave a dying declaration to the police, naming him as the attacker.

Lured for Job Interview, Then Attacked; According to the police complaint, the accused allegedly lured the woman to a secluded spot in the Maidan area under the pretext of a job interview. Once she reached the location, an argument reportedly broke out between the two.

Investigators said that Chariwal then poured kerosene on the woman and set her on fire. Passersby and police personnel rushed her to SSKM Hospital, where she was admitted with severe burn injuries.

Doctors confirmed that she had suffered nearly 90 percent burns and remained in critical condition for two days before succumbing to her injuries on Monday.

The cases documented above are illustrative of long-running patterns of religiously-motivated mob violence against Muslims. In several cases, the immediate trigger was a mundane dispute—over parking, over Holi celebrations, over a land boundary—that rapidly escalated into lethal mob violence along communal lines, consistent with the broader enabling environment of anti-Muslim hate speech and vigilantism documented in successive editions of the IPT.

These cases raise serious concerns under international human rights law, particularly with respect to the right to life under Article 6 of the ICCPR and the State's positive obligation to protect individuals from violence by private actors. Under established international law, States may be held responsible for killings by non-state actors where they fail to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish such conduct. In several of the cases documented above, police responses fell well short of this standard—disputing the cause of death when post-mortem evidence contradicted the official account, registering FIRs against victims rather than perpetrators, or failing to make arrests despite video evidence and named accused.

In July 2025, a group of UN Special Procedures mandate-holders—on freedom of religion or belief; cultural rights; minority issues; and summary executions—issued an allegation letter to India highlighting reports of over 300 such killings since 2014, disproportionately of Muslims. The experts expressed concern that impunity for such violations has 'generated cycles of repression,' and noted that States may be held responsible for the conduct of non-state actors if they fail to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and respond to such conduct.

In 2025, the IPT documented the killings of 27 Muslims in incidents involving mob violence or vigilante attacks by Hindu extremist non-state actors—up from 15 in 2024 and 25 in 2023.

3. ARRESTS AND DETENTION

In the first four months of 2026, Indian authorities continued to carry out widespread and arbitrary arrests and detentions of Muslims across multiple states. These included the criminalisation of routine religious observance—with Muslims arrested for holding iftar gatherings, offering prayers, and attending religious ceremonies—in Uttar Pradesh and other BJP-governed states; escalating enforcement of cow-protection laws, marked by mass arrests, preventive detention, and the imposition of life sentences; the continued targeting of Muslims and Christians under anti-conversion laws across at least five states; the deployment of counter-terrorism and preventive detention laws against Kashmiri Muslims, including student protesters; and disproportionate arrest patterns following communal violence triggered by Hindu nationalist processions.

40+
Muslims arrested for prayers and iftar events
(Jan–Apr 2026)

1,810
arrested under cow protection laws in Gujarat alone
(over approx. two years)

25+
Kashmiri Muslims detained under PSA/UAPA in April 2026 alone

150+
arrested or named following communal violence; disproportionately Muslim
(Jan–Apr 2026)

BJP states led by Uttar Pradesh continue criminalising peaceful manifestations of Muslim faith; 40+ arrested for prayers and fasting:

The criminalisation of peaceful manifestations of Muslim faith in India continued during the period under review, with Muslims arrested for acts as routine as offering prayers and breaking the Ramadan fast. Criminal proceedings continued to be initiated on the basis of complaints by BJP-affiliated individuals or Hindu nationalist groups, with charges grossly disproportionate to the alleged conduct and courts willing to sustain pre-trial detention on grounds that characterise routine Muslim religious activity as inherently threatening to public order. Some reported cases during the period under review included:

- 10 January, Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh: Ahmed Sheikh, a 55-year-old Kashmiri man from Shopian, was detained at the Ram Mandir premises after attempting to offer prayers near the Sita Rasoi. His family produced medical records indicating mental illness; he was later released to them after no malicious intent was found.

- 18 January, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh: Twelve men were arrested in Mohammadganj village for offering Friday prayers in a vacant house after a video surfaced on social media. All were charged with breach of peace and bailed by a -

magistrate the same day. The Superintendent of Police stated that 'conducting any new religious activity or gathering without permission is a violation of the law.'

- Early February, Banswara, Rajasthan: Twelve members of the Tablighi Jamaat (a transnational Islamic missionary movement) from Gujarat were detained after a complaint of pre-Ramadan preaching. The men stated their purpose was to encourage Muslims in the village to offer prayers ahead of Ramadan. They were produced before a court, granted bail, and then escorted to the Gujarat border and expelled from the state.

- 15 March, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh: Fourteen Muslim men in their twenties—all employed at local saree shops—were arrested after they broke their Ramadan fast aboard a boat on the Ganga. After a video circulated on social media, the city president of the BJP's youth wing filed a complaint alleging they had consumed chicken biryani and thrown leftovers into the river. Police arrested all 14 on 17 March under multiple criminal provisions including promoting enmity between groups, outraging religious feelings, and water pollution. More serious charges—extortion under threat of death and transmission of obscene material—were subsequently added, raising the potential sentence to ten years. An investigation by The Wire found that the complainant's account shifted materially between his initial statement and subsequent questioning, and that no available video evidence showed waste being thrown into the river. The boat owner's family stated that the hire was routine and uncoerced, contradicting the extortion charge. Bail was denied on 23 March and again by a Sessions Court on 1 April, which held that posting the gathering on social media 'prima facie established that it was committed with the intention of disrupting social harmony.' All 14 remained in jail at the time of writing.

- 17 March, Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh. A group of Muslim men held an iftar approximately three kilometres from a Hindu ashram inside the Suhelwa Wildlife Sanctuary, near the India–Nepal border. The ashram priest filed an FIR for promoting enmity; a local magistrate granted bail the following day. The district president of the BJP's youth wing then publicly alleged 'espionage near the Nepal border' and demanded the invocation of the National Security Act (NSA, a preventive detention law permitting detention without charge for up to 12 months). Police re-arrested the men on 24 March—including two who had already been bailed—and arrested six more on 25 March, bringing the total to ten. A second FIR added wildlife-sanctuary violations. Six eventually secured bail, but all eight accused subsequently fled their homes fearing further police action. One of the accused told The Wire: 'My family had fears that those accused in this case might get killed in a police encounter, so we left our homes.'

- 19 April, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh. A man identified as Naeem Ahmed was arrested for offering prayers on a road; his family claimed he suffered from mental illness. He was remanded to judicial custody.

These cases are illustrative, not exhaustive. The Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE), in its new report published in March 2026, documented cases of at least 51 Muslims being arrested across Uttar Pradesh for public and peaceful displays of faith and found that the criminalisation of Muslim religious practice in the state forms part of a 'widespread and systematic pattern of abusive and punitive policing targeting Muslims' that may amount to persecution as a crime against humanity. The cases documented here demonstrate that this pattern has continued unabated into 2026. (Also see section on **Religious Freedom**.)

Anti-conversion law arrests continue across at least five BJP states even as courts condemn abuse:

Arrests under India's state-level anti-conversion laws—which criminalise religious conversions by prohibited means—continued across BJP-governed states during the period, targeting both Muslims and Christians. Two states enacted new legislation during the period (Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra; see section on Religious Freedom), while enforcement of existing laws intensified. In most documented cases, complaints were filed by Hindu nationalist organisations, most commonly the Bajrang Dal, and criminal proceedings were initiated despite little or no evidence of coercion or inducement. The pattern persisted even as the Supreme Court and the Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh) High Court issued strong condemnations of the laws' abusive application. Some reported cases during the period under review included:

- 10 January, Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh: Five Muslim men were arrested after the Bajrang Dal raided a private home at 2:30 am where a Dalit family was hosting an urs (a ceremony commemorating the death anniversary of a Muslim saint). The men were charged under the state's anti-conversion law despite the family stating that no conversion had taken place or been proposed. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in a 6 February 2026 statement, referenced this arrest.

- January, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh: A Muslim man was booked under the same law after the uncle of his Buddhist bride objected to their marriage. The bride publicly rejected the allegation of forced conversion.

- 23 February, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh: A Christian pastor was arrested mid-sermon on a Bajrang Dal complaint; police seized 124 religious books from the prayer gathering.

- 1 March, Karnataka: Twenty Christians were detained under that state's anti-conversion law after Hindu nationalists intruded into a prayer meeting and accused the congregants of inducing conversions. All were released on bail the following day.

- 11 April, Guna, Madhya Pradesh. A pastor was arrested after an Easter prayer gathering attended by approximately 400 people from the indigenous Bhil community. The arrest followed a Bajrang Dal complaint alleging conversion through faith healing. A second pastor is absconding.

Separately, Uttar Pradesh's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) continued arrests in the 'Chhangur Baba' investigation, in which conversion activity has been framed as a terrorism-financing and national-security operation. In January 2026, a joint UP–Maharashtra ATS team arrested a man in Nagpur for his alleged role in managing funds for the network. The Enforcement Directorate has opened a parallel money-laundering investigation. The deployment of counter-terrorism agencies and financial-crime laws against what is described as religious conversion illustrates the escalating securitisation of the issue.

According to Christian Solidarity International, at least 110 Christians remained in jail under anti-conversion charges across India as of January 2026—following the release of more than 600 in 2025 after legal intervention by faith-based groups. The Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE), in its March 2026 report, found that Uttar Pradesh's anti-conversion law "appears to have been enacted with discriminatory intent towards Muslims' and 'falls far short of international legal standards." The Panel also noted that of the 208 individuals arrested in the first nine months of the law's operation since 2020, all were Muslim, and that arrests were routinely initiated at the behest of VHP and Bajrang Dal members with no apparent connection to the alleged crimes. On 16 March, a Supreme Court bench quashed multiple anti-conversion FIRs filed in Uttar Pradesh against Christians, describing the prosecutions as a 'travesty of justice' in a 158-page judgment. On 16 April, the Allahabad High Court condemned what it called a 'disturbing trend' of false complaints under the state's anti-conversion law, observing that FIRs were being 'lodged left and right' and 'eventually turn out to be fallacious,' and that investigating officers appeared to be 'acting under pressure or persuaded by some other factors.' Notwithstanding these interventions, arrests under the law continued throughout the period.

BJP states continue weaponising cow slaughter laws to arrest Muslims; 22 detained in single Gujarat raid

The weaponisation of cow-slaughter and cattle-transport laws against Muslims continued to escalate during the period, marked by mass arrests, the use of preventive detention statutes designed for threats to national security, and the recurring pattern in which Muslim victims of vigilante violence are themselves booked under animal-protection laws while their attackers face criminal charges only belatedly, if at all. Reported cases during the period under review included:

- January 2026, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Two men—the operator of a municipal corporation–contracted slaughterhouse and his driver—were arrested after a forensic laboratory confirmed that 26.5 tonnes of seized meat was of bovine origin. Bail was rejected in March 2026 after Hindu organisations filed objections in court, and a BJP legislator publicly demanded the invocation of the National Security Act, a preventive detention law permitting detention without charge for up to twelve months. The municipal corporation permanently shut the facility, and approximately 85 workers—overwhelmingly Muslim—lost their livelihoods. The use of the NSA against cow-slaughter accused has become routine in Madhya Pradesh: in June 2024 alone, the state invoked it in three separate cases, each followed by the demolition of the accused's home.

- 26 February, Hathoda village, Surat, Gujarat. Twenty-two Muslim men were arrested and forty named in the criminal complaint after police accompanying a Bajrang Dal (a Hindu nationalist paramilitary organisation) cow-vigilante squad raided an alleged slaughter site at 1:30 am. Charges included attempted murder, rioting, and Gujarat's cow-protection law—which carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

- 25 March, Kokrajhar, Assam. Seven persons were detained after a mob attacked and vandalised Muslim homes on the allegation that cow meat had been found nearby. Those detained included members of the targeted Muslim family itself, illustrating the recurring pattern in which victims and alleged perpetrators are treated interchangeably by police.

The criminalisation of cattle-related trades is closely linked to lethal violence.

- In January 2026, a 35-year-old Muslim man was lynched by cow vigilantes in Balasore, Odisha, who forced him to chant Hindu religious slogans before beating him to death. The first criminal complaint registered by police booked the dead man under cow-slaughter and animal-cruelty laws; a murder complaint against the mob was lodged only after the family filed a separate complaint.

These cases are illustrative of a far more pervasive pattern. Data tabled in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly on 25 February 2026 revealed that 629 cow-smuggling cases had been registered and 1,810 persons arrested over approximately two years in that state alone. Of those, 184 were placed in preventive detention without charge, 50 were externed from their home districts, and 39 properties were demolished at a combined assessed value of approximately ₹60 million ($720,000). In a single district, courts imposed three life sentences and eleven terms of ten years' rigorous imprisonment. An investigation by The Wire published the same month found that the regime has devastated Muslim communities economically, with families reporting destitution after the arrest of breadwinners and the demolition of properties. The Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE), in its March 2026 report, found that the targeting of Muslims engaged in meat-related trades in Uttar Pradesh may amount to persecution as a crime against humanity. The Panel separately documented mass cow-protection arrests in Assam—including approximately 300 Muslims arrested statewide in mid-2025—as part of a broader pattern of discriminatory criminalisation. The cases documented above demonstrate that this pattern of weaponised enforcement continued unabated across multiple states into 2026.

Indian authorities continue abusing preventive detention and anti-terror laws to target Kashmiri Muslims; 25+ detained in April alone

Indian authorities in Jammu & Kashmir continued to deploy the Public Safety Act (PSA)—which permits preventive detention without charge or trial for up to two years—and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)—India's principal counter-terrorism law, under which bail is near-impossible—against Kashmiri Muslims during the period.

Between 13 and 17 April, sixteen young men were arrested under UAPA in Sopore, Baramulla after students at a government girls' school protested an alleged sexual assault by a senior lecturer. Police charged those detained with 'spreading misinformation on social media' and 'infiltrating' the otherwise peaceful protest—applying counter-terrorism provisions to what was a local grievance over sexual violence. On 24 April, six further youth were booked under the PSA on detention warrants issued by the District Magistrate of Baramulla and transferred to Bhadarwah District Jail, approximately 300 km from their homes—a routine practice designed to isolate detainees from family and legal counsel.

Individual PSA detentions continued elsewhere: on 9 April, a man was detained under PSA in Kathua for alleged 'anti-national activities'; on 17 April, a PSA order was issued in Anantnag; and on 28 April, another in Poonch. The Counter-Intelligence Kashmir (CIK) chargesheeted a couple in Kulgam on 1 April under UAPA for operating an alleged '*social media propaganda network*'—part of an expanding pattern in which online expression is prosecuted under terrorism laws. On 17 April, District Magistrates in four Jammu districts imposed 60-day social media curbs; the Internet Freedom Foundation described the orders as 'illegal.'

The J&K High Court quashed at least four PSA detention orders during the period. On 5 February, a judge quashed the detention of a man from Kokernag, terming the order 'illegal from inception' and observing that the PSA had been invoked with less scrutiny than 'a routine traffic challan'. Further PSA orders were quashed in Srinagar (16 February), Pulwama (13 March), and Bandipora (17 March)—the last on grounds the detention was based on 'vague' reasoning. On 27 April, the Court quashed the PSA detention of AAP MLA Mehraj Din Malik—the first sitting J&K legislator detained under the Act in recent memory—finding 'non-application of mind' by the detaining authority. However, on 22 April the same Court upheld two other PSA detentions, noting that judicial review of the executive's 'subjective satisfaction' remains 'limited.' Even where courts do quash PSA orders, J&K authorities routinely issue fresh detention orders immediately after a court-ordered release, a pattern that Amnesty International has described as a 'revolving door' of indefinite detention without trial, re-detaining individuals on new grounds the same day they are released. In 2025, the IPT had documented reports of over 3,000 Kashmiri Muslims being detained in the immediate aftermath of the April 2025 Pahalgam attack, with approximately 100 placed under PSA and 12 charged under UAPA; a further 1,000 were detained following the November Delhi car bombing. According to the Kashmir Law and Justice Project, at least 65 people were arrested during near-daily cordon-and-search operations in July–August 2025 alone. The latest detentions demonstrate that the infrastructure of mass preventive continues to operate at scale.

Arrest patterns following communal violence continue to disproportionately target Muslims in BJP-governed states; over 150 arrested or named across reported incidents

During incidents of communal violence in the period—most concentrated around the Hindu festivals of Holi (4 March) and Ram Navami (26–27 March)—police continued to register criminal complaints that disproportionately named Muslim individuals, even in cases where Hindu processions triggered the underlying confrontation. Hindu participants were either not named or named in significantly smaller numbers. This pattern was most pronounced in BJP-governed states but was also evident elsewhere. (also see section on Torture and Ill-Treatment: Non-State Actors)

Reported instances during the period under review included:

- 4 March, Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh (Holi). Eight Muslim men were named in the FIR and approximately 100 unidentified persons charged after a dispute in Mau Rasulpur village in which Hindu villagers allegedly threw colours forcefully on a Muslim resident, sparking a confrontation that injured approximately 11 people. No Hindu instigators were named—despite the original complaint identifying forced colour-throwing as the trigger.

•26 March, Garhwa, Jharkhand (Ram Navami). At least 19–20 people were arrested and paraded publicly in handcuffs after a clash during a Ram Navami procession over religious flags and firecrackers. The FIR named 72 individuals —51 Muslim and 21 Hindu—plus over 200 unnamed persons, a disproportionate ratio given that stone-pelting was reported from both sides.

•26 March, Shrirampur, Ahilyanagar district, Maharashtra (Ram Navami). A case was registered after stone-pelting as a Ram Navami flag procession passed near a dargah; three people were injured, one reportedly losing an eye. Three days later, Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane publicly stated that those who were 'feeling burned' should 'go to Pakistan… we don't need this filth here'—an incitement to violence that attracted no legal consequences.

Separately, in Delhi's Uttam Nagar on 4 March—also Holi—a dispute over a water balloon escalated into the lynching of a Hindu man by a group of Muslim men. Twenty-two people were named in the FIR and 18 arrested; While the arrests were legally warranted, within days, the MCD demolished portions of the main accused's family home—collective punishment violating the Supreme Court's November 2024 guidelines on punitive demolitions. Meanwhile, a local Hindu Raksha Dal leader publicly declared on camera in the same neighbourhood: 'This Eid, we will play Holi with blood by shooting Muslims.' While an FIR was registered against Sharma in Uttarakhand, he was not arrested and continued to deliver inflammatory speeches. In a departure from this trend, on 27 March in Raghunathganj (Murshidabad, West Bengal), thirty people were arrested—including an RSS leader and other Hindu nationalists—after a saffron-clad Ram Navami procession passed a mosque during Friday prayers, with participants allegedly making derogatory remarks targeting the Muslim community. The confrontation escalated; approximately 40 Muslim-owned shops and stalls were looted or burned and around 30 people were injured.

The cases documented above, which are illustrative, constitute arbitrary deprivation of liberty in violation of Article 9 ICCPR, carried out without credible legal basis, in a discriminatory manner, or in reprisal for the peaceful exercise of protected rights. The systematic and disproportionate targeting of Muslims in the application of these laws also violates the prohibition of discrimination. Where arrests follow the exercise of freedom of religion, expression, or peaceful assembly, they constitute not merely violations of liberty but also attacks on the underlying protected rights—producing a chilling effect intended to suppress the religious and civic life of India's Muslim communities.

4. TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

I. State Actors

During the first four months of 2026, state actors continued to be implicated in serious cases of custodial torture, assault, and ill-treatment of Muslims. These included the continuation of 'half-encounter' shootings in Uttar Pradesh; multiple reports of custodial abuse by police forces, including a custodial death in Delhi, the public parading of an accused man in Kanpur, and the use of communal slurs by Railway Protection Force personnel; and the shooting and critical injury of two Muslim men by Border Security Force personnel in Assam.

16,284
UP Police 'encounter' operations since March 2017
266 killed · 10,990 injured
170
custodial deaths in first 74 days of 2026
(NHRC data, tabled in Parliament)
0
convictions for custodial deaths between 2018 and 2023
285
civilians shot by BSF along eastern borders since 2014
(Ain O Salish Kendra data)

Uttar Pradesh Police continue 'half encounter' shootings despite rebukes from High Court and UN Special Procedures

Police in Uttar Pradesh continued to carry out so-called 'half-encounters'—a colloquial term for non-fatal police shootings in which suspects are shot and injured, typically in the legs or knees, before being formally arrested—as a routine tool of law enforcement during the reporting period. These incidents, widely alleged to be staged, constitute a recurring form of custodial torture and ill-treatment and have disproportionately affected the state's Muslim population. (Also see section on Deprivation of Life for fatal 'encounter' killings in Uttar Pradesh during the same period.)

- On 15 March, police in Bijnor district shot a 35-year-old Muslim man, Shoaib Ahmad, in the leg during what officers described as an act of 'self-defence' after Ahmad allegedly attempted to snatch a sub-inspector's pistol while being taken for a medical examination. However, a video that emerged on social media the following day appeared to show several people beating a man— said to be Ahmad—on the terrace of a two-storey house, before bringing him downstairs where he was allegedly assaulted in the presence of police personnel.

In the footage, the individual appears unable to walk and does not resist as officers carry him away. Ahmad had been accused of vandalising the homes of local functionaries of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu nationalist network of which the BJP is the political wing. Bijnor Police denied claims that Ahmad was unable to walk, calling such assertions "completely false." Locals told Maktoob Media that police had made Ahmad "a scapegoat" because the alleged victims were RSS members, adding that parts of his house had been bulldozed.

The incident was reported weeks after the Allahabad High Court—which has jurisdiction over Uttar Pradesh—issued a sharp rebuke of the practice. In an order dated 28 January, the Court observed that the shooting of accused persons in the leg had "seemingly become a routine feature" in UP, carried out "to please superior officers or to teach the accused a so-called lesson by way of punishment." The Court noted that in the cases before it—three bail petitions by individuals injured in separate police 'encounters'—no police officer had sustained any injury, and the Supreme Court's mandatory guidelines on the conduct of encounters (known as the PUCL guidelines) had not been complied with. The Court issued mandatory directions including the prohibition of out-of-turn promotions or gallantry awards following encounters, registration of a separate FIR in every case involving death or grievous injury, independent investigation by a different police unit under senior supervision, and warned that failure to comply could expose the district police chief to contempt proceedings.

Separately, on 25 February, the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial executions issued a joint warning of "systemic policing failures" in India, citing credible information of "a pervasive pattern of excessive and often lethal use of force by police, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Assam, including so-called 'encounters' and 'half-encounters', alongside widespread custodial torture." The experts noted that marginalised communities such as Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis had been disproportionately affected, and warned that the use of terms like 'encounters' and 'half-encounters' "masks a pervasive and dehumanising practice that risks normalising unlawful violence and eroding public trust in law enforcement."

The Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE)—a group of prominent jurists who have investigated and prosecuted human rights atrocities and international crimes in Myanmar, North Korea, Sri Lanka, Rwanda and Sierra Leone—devoted extensive attention to the practice of "half-encounters" in its March 2026 report. Describing a pattern of "punitive and premeditated violence rather than legitimate law enforcement," the Panel found a reasonable basis to believe that the practices followed by UP Police may amount to torture as a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(f) of the Rome Statute, as well as to 'other inhumane acts' as a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(k). The incidents reported in this period mark the continuation of a pattern documented in previous editions of the IPT. According to the latest available official figures, between March 2017 and December 2025, UP Police conducted over 16,284 such 'operations', resulting in the killing of 266 individuals and injuries to 10,990. Analysis of data released in September 2024, when the cumulative death toll stood at 207, had shown that over 32 percent of those killed were Muslim—despite Muslims constituting only approximately 19 percent of the state's population. These figures are likely to be significant undercounts, owing to the lack of publicly released disaggregated data, the absence of independent investigations into most shootings, and the routine acceptance of police claims of 'self-defence'.

Reports of custodial abuse by police forces targeting Muslims and other minorities continue

During the period under review, incidents of custodial abuse by police forces targeting Muslims continued to be reported, including alleged beatings in custody, public humiliation, and the use of communal slurs by officers. Some reported cases included:

- On 27 January, a 70-year-old Muslim woman wrote to the President of India alleging that Railway Protection Force (RPF) constables at Anand Vihar railway station in Delhi had beaten her son and 17-year-old grandson while seeing her off on a train earlier that day. According to multiple reports, the constables hurled communal slurs including "Bangladeshi" and other derogatory terms while assaulting them, seized their phones and money, and subsequently filed charges against the victims under the Railway Act. The RPF denied using any religious slurs.

- In early February, police in the Ghatampur area of Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, publicly paraded a Muslim man accused in a case involving allegations of pressuring a woman for marriage and religious conversion. The man was marched on foot through prominent town crossings, forced to apologise to onlookers while being beaten by police officers, and compelled to repeat statements of contrition—all before being presented before a court. The public parading of accused persons is prohibited under guidelines issued by the National Human Rights Commission and the Supreme Court.

- On 8 March, in Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh, the family of a 60-year-old Muslim man alleged that police had accepted bribes from the opposing party in a dispute, detained the Muslim complainant rather than the accused, and beaten him in custody. The man was shot dead by the accused shortly after his release. (Also see section on Deprivation of Life.)

- On 20 April, a 34-year-old Muslim man died in police custody at Jahangirpuri police station in Delhi. Police stated that the man had "fallen ill" at the station and attributed his death to dehydration. His family disputed this account, with his mother telling media: "My son was completely fine when he left home. Police beat him to death." The man, a father of three, had reportedly been picked up during routine night patrolling on the basis of suspicion. (Also see section on Deprivation of Life for a fuller account of this case.)

These incidents are illustrative, and occurred against a backdrop of broader institutional concern over custodial violence in India. In March, the Union government told Parliament that 170 custodial deaths had been reported in the first 74 days of 2026 alone, based on data from the National Human Rights Commission. In April, a court in Tamil Nadu sentenced nine police officers to death for the custodial torture and killing of two Dalit men—a father and son—during the COVID-19 lockdown in June 2020; while Amnesty International described the verdict as "a rare moment of accountability," it cautioned that the death penalty does not address the "deeper reforms urgently required to ensure police oversight and accountability." Between 1999 and 2023, over 2,200 people died in police custody in India, yet convictions remain exceptionally rare, with no convictions recorded in custodial death cases between 2018 and 2023. As noted in the previous story, in February the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial executions warned of "systemic policing failures" in India, including "widespread custodial torture," with Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasis disproportionately affected.

Assam: Border forces shoot two Muslim men while fishing during Ramadan

During the period under review, incidents of custodial abuse by police forces targeting Muslims conDuring the intervening night of 8–9 March, Border Security Force (BSF) personnel in South Salmara–Mankachar district, Assam, shot and critically injured two Muslim brothers—Rashidul Islam and Rejabul Sk—while they were fishing in a river to arrange food for the holy month of Ramadan.

The brothers were reportedly at a spot more than one and a half kilometres inside Indian territory when BSF personnel allegedly opened fire at approximately 2:30 a.m. without warning. Rashidul sustained grievous injuries to his abdomen; Rejabul suffered a critical gunshot wound to the head. Both remained in critical condition at time of reporting.

According to the human rights organisation Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), which petitioned the NHRC over the incident, the BSF personnel fled immediately after the shooting without arranging medical assistance. The family's attempts to file a First Information Report (FIR) were obstructed: police at Mankachar station redirected them to another station, where officers accepted a written complaint but refused to issue a receipt or diary number. No FIR had been registered as of mid-March. The BSF has a well-documented record of excessive use of force along India's eastern borders; according to data compiled by Ain O Salish Kendra, a Dhaka-based human rights organisation, the BSF shot and killed 285 Bangladeshi civilians between 2014 and February 2026—though the victims in the present case were Indian citizens, not Bangladeshi nationals.

The cases documented above are illustrative of broader patterns. Torture and ill-treatment remain endemic across India's law enforcement apparatus, routinely employed as tools of policing and, in the case of Muslims, frequently shaped by discriminatory religious motives. India has yet to ratify the UN Convention against Torture or enact a standalone domestic law criminalising torture—a gap that contributes to near-total impunity for perpetrators and the absence of effective remedy for victims. A June 2025 report by REDRESS highlighted this normalisation of custodial torture in India and the lack of effective safeguards for victims. Complementing these findings, a report by SAJC had documented recurring patterns of custodial violence specifically targeting Muslims, finding that Muslim detainees were routinely subjected not only to severe physical abuse, but also to degrading treatment that explicitly targeted their religious identity.

II. Non-State Actors

Hindu nationalist non-state actors continued to subject religious minorities across India to widespread physical violence, intimidation, and humiliation during the reporting period. Communal mob violence targeting Muslims was reported in at least twelve states, driven by Hindu religious processions, cow vigilantism, and localised disputes rapidly given a religious dimension—with the state response in multiple cases compounding the harm through selective arrests, punitive demolitions, and the displacement of Muslim communities. Over 48 individual hate crimes against Muslims were documented across 18 states, including beatings, forced chanting of Hindu slogans, stripping, and—in at least two cases—victims being set on fire. Christian communities too faced a sharp escalation in hostility. Separately, fresh inter-ethnic violence in Manipur between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities killed at least fifteen people, including two children and a legislator, despite a change of government and disarmament efforts.

12

states where inter-religious clashes targeting Muslims were reported, with selective state crackdowns on Muslim communities

48+

documented incidents of violent assault against Muslims across 18 states, including at least 4 child victims

531

anti-Christian incidents recorded by the United Christian Forum in the first four months of 2026

(UCF helpline data)

Inter-religious clashes reported in twelve states; Muslims face selective state crackdown

During the first four months of 2026, India witnessed a marked escalation in communal mob violence targeting Muslims, with significant episodes reported across at least twelve states. The violence was driven by a range of triggers, including Hindu religious processions, cow-related vigilantism, localised disputes rapidly given a religious dimension, and—in one case—ethnic tensions over political representation. A major flashpoint emerged during Ram Navami—a Hindu festival celebrating the birth of the deity Ram—in late March, which saw coordinated violence against Muslim communities, shops, and places of worship in multiple states simultaneously.

Several recurring patterns were observed: Hindu religious processions—particularly during Ram Navami—were used as vehicles for targeted attacks on Muslim properties, businesses, and mosques, with participants in some cases openly brandishing weapons and displaying inflammatory material. The state response continued to be characterised by selectivity: in multiple episodes, Muslims faced disproportionate arrests, one-sided FIRs (First Information Reports—the formal police complaints that initiate criminal proceedings in India), and punitive demolitions, while those responsible for instigating violence faced limited or delayed accountability. In at least three states (Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Tripura), entire Muslim families or communities were driven from their homes—a pattern of collective displacement that points to an escalating severity. In several cases—including in Madhya Pradesh, Delhi, and Maharashtra, all governed by the BJP—state authorities compounded the harm through punitive demolitions, mosque closures, or other retaliatory measures directed at Muslim victims rather than perpetrators.

Two Bengali Muslim men were also killed during mob violence in Meghalaya linked to ethnic tensions over political representation (see Deprivation of Life — Non-State Actors).

Assam

In Kokrajhar, on 26 March, a mob attacked and vandalised homes belonging to Muslim families in Nayasara village after suspected cow meat was found near a house. Videos showed a large group vandalising properties in the presence of police. Seven persons were detained. The incident occurred against the backdrop of recurring cow-related vigilantism in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)—an autonomous administrative area for indigenous Bodo communities in western Assam —which has a history of violence between Bodo and Muslim communities, including mass attacks in 2012 and 2014 that killed over 130 people and displaced hundreds of thousands.

Chhattisgarh

In Gariaband district, on 1–2 February, all ten Muslim families living in a village were driven from their homes after a mob attacked their properties. Seven police personnel sustained injuries during the incident, which was reportedly triggered by a localised dispute that was rapidly given a religious dimension. The violence effectively constituted collective punishment, with the entire Muslim population of the village expelled regardless of any individual involvement in the triggering dispute.

Delhi

In Uttam Nagar (west Delhi), on 4 March, the killing of a 26-year-old Hindu man during the festival of Holi—in which coloured powders and water are thrown as part of celebrations—triggered a prolonged campaign of anti-Muslim targeting in the neighbourhood. According to multiple reports, the incident began when a child playing with water balloons on a terrace accidentally splashed water on a Muslim woman passing below, sparking an argument between two neighbouring families that escalated into a violent altercation. The victim was attacked by a group when he returned from elsewhere and died of his injuries. Police confirmed that the two families had known each other for approximately 50 years and had prior disputes over parking; the victim's own parents stated that their grievance was with one family and that other Muslims were not at fault. Despite this, the incident was rapidly appropriated by Hindu nationalist groups—including the Bajrang Dal, among others —who descended on the area, delivered inflammatory speeches, and reframed the killing as a communal attack.

On 8 March, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi demolished portions of the house of one of the Muslim accused without prior notice—a punitive measure that has become a recurring pattern in BJP-governed jurisdictions (see Discrimination in Access to Economic, Social & Cultural Rights). The Delhi High Court intervened on 12 March, staying further demolitions after the mothers of the accused filed petitions arguing that demolition cannot be used as a punitive measure in criminal cases.

In the weeks that followed, the situation continued to escalate. A Hindu nationalist coalition organised a protest march on 15 March with participants calling for 'badla' (revenge) and threatening 'khoon ki Holi' (blood Holi) on Eid, the Muslim festival marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. A leader of the Hindu Raksha Dal, a Hindu nationalist group, openly declared that Eid celebrations and prayers would not be allowed in the area. Dozens of Muslim families—reportedly at least 100, some of whom had lived in the neighbourhood for over 50 years—packed their belongings and fled ahead of Eid, fearing for their safety. The APCR (Association for Protection of Civil Rights) approached the Delhi High Court, which on 19 March directed police to ensure peaceful celebration of Eid and ordered the removal of over 170 inflammatory social media posts.

Over a month later, on 12 April, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), a prominent Hindu nationalist organisation, distributed 1,700 trishuls—metal tridents that serve as both religious symbols and weapons—to youth in the area, including children as young as ten, alongside further inflammatory speeches. The VHP stated that plans were in place to distribute over 30,000 trishuls across Delhi. The episode illustrates how a localised criminal incident—one that both the police and the victim's own family described as a neighbourhood dispute, not a communal one—was systematically appropriated by Hindu nationalist groups and leveraged into a sustained campaign of intimidation and displacement against an entire Muslim community, compounded by punitive and discriminatory state action.

Jharkhand

In Garhwa, on 30 March, a clash broke out during a Ram Navami procession near a mosque, reportedly triggered by disputes over the route, religious flags, and firecrackers. Stone-pelting was reported from both sides. Police resorted to tear gas to disperse crowds, and 19 people were arrested—13 from the Muslim community and 6 from the Hindu community. Those arrested were subsequently paraded publicly in handcuffs by police, a practice that has been criticised by the Supreme Court. (See also: Arrests and Detentions.)

Madhya Pradesh

In Tarana (Ujjain district), on 22–23 January, a communal clash broke out with reports of stone-pelting. Authorities imposed Section 144 (prohibitory orders) to control the situation.

In Jabalpur, on 20–21 February, a communal clash erupted during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan after what residents described as deliberate provocation near a Muslim neighbourhood. Police fired tear gas at a mosque where children were present and subsequently locked the mosque, preventing Friday prayers for weeks. In the aftermath, 49 people were arrested, with community members alleging that the police response disproportionately targeted Muslims while those accused of provocation faced limited action.

In Betul district, in February–March, Muslim families fled their village after a Hindu nationalist mob torched their shops in retaliation for an online video allegedly showing the slaughter of a cow. The displacement occurred despite the lack of any established link between the local Muslim residents and the video in question.

Maharashtra

In Pune, on 16 March, a mob of 100 to 150 people attacked a group of Muslims who had gathered for iftar—the evening meal breaking the daily Ramadan fast—near a lake, shouting 'remove your skull caps.' Eleven people were injured in the assault.

In Ahilyanagar, on 27 March, a Ram Navami procession drew controversy after a video showed a young man symbolically releasing an arrow towards a nearby mosque, an act cheered by participants. In a related incident in Shrirampur city, stone-pelting was reported during a Ram Navami procession passing a dargah (Muslim shrine), leaving two people injured. Police registered a case against a cleric and around 12 unidentified persons and deployed State Reserve Police Force personnel.

In Goregaon (Mumbai), in early April, a clash during a religious procession was followed by the municipal corporation demolishing the house of a Muslim family, in what residents described as a punitive measure. (See also: Discrimination in Access to Economic, Social & Cultural Rights)

Meghalaya

In West Garo Hills, on 11–12 March, large-scale violence erupted targeting Bengali Muslims amid tensions over the participation of non-tribal candidates in the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections—a local governing body for indigenous Garo tribal communities in the state's northeast. Two Bengali Muslim men were killed during clashes in the town of Chibinang (see Deprivation of Life — Non-State Actors). A large mob vandalised the central Jama Masjid (Friday mosque) in the district capital Tura, assaulted the prayer leader, and damaged parts of the building. More than 30 shops owned by non-tribal Muslims were vandalised or burned, and homes belonging to Muslim families were also set on fire. Videos circulated online showing a Garo community leader delivering inflammatory speeches calling Bengali Muslims 'illegal immigrants from Bangladesh' and shouting 'Allahu Akbar will not work here.' Authorities imposed a full-day curfew across the district and suspended mobile internet services for 48 hours across all five Garo Hills districts. The state government subsequently postponed the GHADC elections citing safety concerns.

Rajasthan

In Ajmer, in early February, an adult Hindu woman's decision to live with a Muslim man triggered protests by her family and Hindu nationalist groups outside the Ganj police station, where family members threatened self-immolation. Protesters framed the relationship as a case of so-called 'love jihad'—a Hindu nationalist conspiracy theory alleging a coordinated campaign by Muslim men to convert Hindu women through feigned romantic relationships. The unrest escalated into vandalism, with shops near the police station damaged. Police confirmed that the woman was an adult acting of her own free will and found no evidence of coercion.

Telangana

In Banswada (Kamareddy district), on 21 February, a communal clash erupted after an objection was raised to a devotional song being played near a Muslim neighbourhood. The incident led to a local bandh (shutdown).

A report by the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR), a human rights organisation, published during this period documented a broader pattern of politically driven communal violence targeting indigenous, Muslim, and Dalit (oppressed caste) communities across the state.

Tripura

In Fatikroy (Unakoti district), on 10 January, a Hindu supremacist mob set fire to a mosque, several Muslim homes, and shops following an altercation reportedly linked to a cricket match dispute that was rapidly given a religious dimension. According to reports, witnesses alleged that police watched passively as the mob carried out the attacks, which affected approximately 50 to 60 Muslim families. While 13 individuals were subsequently arrested in connection with the violence, members of the Muslim community alleged that victims were also named in counter-complaints filed by the perpetrators, perpetuating an atmosphere of fear. Opposition parties visited the area days later and noted that the 'atmosphere of fear persists.'

Uttar Pradesh

In Shahjahanpur, on 5 March, during the Hindu festival of Holi, a dispute broke out after colours were forcefully thrown on a Muslim resident. The ensuing confrontation involved members of both communities; however, the subsequent police complaint named eight Muslims and 100 unidentified Muslim persons, while zero Hindus were named—exemplifying the pattern of one-sided policing in Uttar Pradesh.

In Mathura, on 21–22 March, a false communal narrative was constructed after a self-appointed cow vigilante died in a road accident. Thousands of people blocked a national highway, and communal tensions were stoked despite the death having no connection to any inter-community dispute. At least 19 people were arrested, including a Hindu nationalist leader identified as instrumental in spreading the false narrative.

West Bengal

In Murshidabad district, on 16–17 January, unrest broke out following the death of a Bengali Muslim migrant worker under disputed circumstances. Protests erupted in the area, during which journalists covering the events were allegedly attacked and injured.

In South 24 Parganas, on 25 January, three Muslim meat traders were attacked by a mob of 40 to 50 people in the Julpia area. The attackers used communal slurs, calling the victims 'Muslim Bangladeshis,' and forcibly stripped the men to 'verify' their religious identity. One victim was forced to write derogatory statements about his own parentage under duress. The wife of one of the traders, who attempted to intervene, was allegedly molested and had her clothes torn. Three suspects were arrested, but the victims identified several 'main culprits'—including named individuals—who remained free at the time of reporting. In Raghunathganj (Murshidabad district), on 28 March, a Ram Navami procession organised by Hindu nationalist groups turned violent, with participants reportedly attacking around 40 Muslim-owned shops, looting and setting several ablaze in the Fultala area, a predominantly Muslim locality near the Jangipur subdivisional hospital. The violence reportedly began after the procession, accompanied by loud music and dancing, passed in front of a mosque while Friday prayers were in progress. Witnesses alleged that processionists climbed onto rooftops of Muslim homes, hoisted saffron flags—a colour closely associated with the Hindu nationalist movement—vandalised properties, and assaulted residents. Approximately 30 people were injured, and 30 individuals were arrested—including a local leader of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the parent organisation of India's ruling Hindu nationalist movement. Residents alleged that police did little to intervene despite the violence occurring just 500 metres from the police station. The incident occurred ahead of West Bengal's Assembly elections, with political parties trading accusations over responsibility. In Kulti (Asansol), also on 27 March, a state legislator from the BJP and other participants in a Ram Navami procession were filmed openly brandishing swords.

Dozens of Muslims assaulted in religiously-motivated hate crimes across India

In the first four months of 2026, Muslims across at least 18 states faced over 48 documented incidents of violent assault and intimidation. The victims included cattle traders and transporters, Kashmiri vendors, students, clerics, labourers, and children, with many attacked in public, on trains, or at their workplaces. A significant number of assaults (at least 14) were linked to self-styled gau rakshak (cow protection) vigilantes, while others stemmed from the branding of victims as 'Bangladeshis' or 'infiltrators,' fabricated allegations of 'love jihad' (a term used by Hindu nationalists to describe relationships between Muslim men and Hindu women), and the targeting of Muslims for visible markers of religious identity such as beards, skullcaps, or prayer.

At least two victims were set on fire—a rickshaw puller in Tripura and a student in Uttar Pradesh—and at least four minors were among those attacked, including four Bengali Muslim children detained at a bakery in Chhattisgarh and two schoolboys assaulted in Delhi after being asked their names. Several victims were stripped, tied up, forced to chant Hindu religious slogans, made to eat cow dung, or publicly humiliated, continuing the pattern of ritualised, identity-based violence documented in previous editions of the IPT.

Although these cases represent only a fraction of those likely to have occurred, they indicate the persistence and geographic spread of anti-Muslim hate crimes across India. The Muslim Mirror's hate crime databases documented 78 incidents in January and 66 in February 2026 alone—with 95 per cent concentrated in BJP-governed states—while the Supreme Court in February dismissed a contempt petition alleging non-compliance with its own 2018 Tehseen Poonawala guidelines on preventing mob lynching, with the Chief Justice calling the directions 'unmanageable.'

Some reported cases included:

- In early January in Mayurbhanj (Odisha), a Muslim man was stripped, tied by the legs, dragged naked on a public road, and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' by a group of assailants. A video of the attack went viral. Police registered an FIR on 3 January and arrested two accused; the Orissa High Court subsequently ordered DSP-level supervision of the investigation.

- On 2 January in Madhubani (Bihar), a Muslim daily-wage labourer who had travelled to the district seeking work was surrounded while buying goods from a shop, accused of being 'Bangladeshi,' chased for three kilometres, and beaten severely. He was hospitalised with serious injuries.

- On 3 January in Madhubani (Bihar), a Muslim labourer from Supaul district was attacked after being branded 'Bangladeshi.' Assailants claimed his phone contained Pakistani and Bangladeshi numbers as 'proof.' He was forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' and beaten when he hesitated. Police registered an FIR on charges of attempt to murder and confirmed the victim was an Indian citizen.

•On 3 January in Agartala (Tripura), a Muslim rickshaw puller was assaulted, partially buried in sand, and set on fire.

•On 5 January in Aklera, Jhalawar (Rajasthan), an elderly Muslim man was surrounded by eight to ten men who kicked him in the head and body, beat him with sticks, and branded him a 'Rohingya and Bangladeshi infiltrator.' He was seen lying helplessly on the ground in a video shared on social media.

•On 9 January in Moradabad (Uttar Pradesh), a 19-year-old Muslim student was set on fire with a flammable substance outside his college immediately after exiting an examination. He sustained approximately 8 per cent burns and was hospitalised. An FIR was registered; both accused were absconding at the time of reporting.

•On 10 January in Mangaluru (Karnataka), a Muslim migrant worker was assaulted and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' after being called 'Bangladeshi.'

•On 11 January in Katihar (Bihar), a Muslim utensil hawker was assaulted and branded 'Bangladeshi.'

•On 11 January in Surajpur (Chhattisgarh), Bajrang Dal members assaulted eight Bengali Muslim migrant workers—including four minors—at a bakery after they demanded unpaid wages, calling them 'Bangladeshis' despite being shown Aadhaar cards. Police arrived but reportedly did not intervene; the workers were taken to the police station and the four minors placed in a government shelter home.

•On 13 January in Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim salon owner was assaulted by Hindu Raksha Dal members over his shop's signboard.

•On 17 January in Rampur (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim truck driver was assaulted by a right-wing group after his truck carrying animal hides was intercepted.

•On 25 January in Agra (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim youth was beaten with a stick in a narrow lane after being asked his name and religion. CCTV footage showed the accused striking the victim repeatedly. Police arrested the accused and sent him to judicial custody, but denied a communal motive despite the video evidence.

•On 26 January in Puri (Odisha), an elderly Bengali-speaking Muslim man was detained by Hindu nationalist activists, forced to do sit-ups, made to chant Hindu slogans, and physically assaulted.

•On 28 January in Vikas Nagar (Uttarakhand), an 18-year-old Kashmiri shawl vendor was beaten with iron rods after being identified as Muslim, sustaining a fractured left arm and severe head injuries. Other family members were also assaulted. No FIR had been registered at the time of reporting.

•On 29 January in Indore (Madhya Pradesh), a Muslim bus driver was assaulted at a college by members of a Hindutva group on false accusations.

•On 31 January in Kangra (Himachal Pradesh), a Kashmiri shawl seller was physically assaulted by a right-wing activist who went live on Facebook during the attack.

•On 31 January in Barmer (Rajasthan), a 50-year-old Muslim man was kicked in the head with a shoe, verbally abused, and forced from his home.

• In late January or early February in Ghumarwin, Bilaspur (Himachal Pradesh), a Kashmiri shawl seller was attacked by three masked assailants who also damaged his merchandise.

•On 5 February in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), cow vigilantes assaulted a Muslim driver after a car carrying cattle met with an accident and handed him over to police.

•On 5 February in Shrigonda, Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra), members of Shri Shivpratisthan Hindusthan assaulted a Muslim cattle transporter and detained him before handing over the vehicle and cattle to police.

•On 5 February in Mayurbhanj (Odisha), a Muslim vendor was confronted by a right-wing mob, branded 'Bangladeshi,' threatened with a sharp object, and coerced into chanting 'Jai Shri Ram.' A video documented the incident.

•On 6 February in Odisha (location unspecified), two elderly Muslim vendors were beaten and forced to chant 'Jai Shri Ram' and threatened to leave the state.

•On 8 February in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim man was assaulted by a group of youths who pulled his skull cap off.

•On 9 February in Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), Bajrang Dal members beat a Muslim man on an accusation of 'love jihad' and forced him to chant Hindu slogans.

•On 11 February in Odisha (location unspecified), an elderly Bengali Muslim man was forced to do sit-ups, chant 'Gau Mata ki Jai,' and was physically assaulted.

•On 11 February on a train near Hyderabad (Telangana), approximately 20 men assaulted a Muslim passenger on the Sainagar Shirdi–Kakinada Express after noticing his beard and skullcap.

•On 16 February in Shrigonda, Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra), cow vigilantes affiliated with Shri Shivpratisthan Hindusthan assaulted cattle transporters and confiscated 19 cows and four pickup trucks.

•On 19 February in Gurugram (Haryana), cow vigilantes attacked Muslim drivers over allegations of cattle transport.

•On 22 February in Gandhinagar (Gujarat), cow vigilantes rammed a buffalo transport vehicle and then assaulted the Muslim drivers.

•On 22 February in Budaun (Uttar Pradesh), a viral video showed a young man assaulting elderly Muslims who were collecting zakat. The footage triggered widespread outrage.

•On 24 February in Hyderabad (Telangana), a Muslim truck driver was beaten by a mob of approximately 400 after a cattle truck collided with a car.

•On 24 February in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh), an elderly Muslim hawker was assaulted while fasting and told 'No entry for Muslims.'

•On 25 February in Rudrapur (Uttarakhand), an elderly Muslim man was beaten with sticks by a group led by a temple manager after offering namaz on vacant land near a temple. He was told: 'How dare you offer namaz on a Brahmin's land?' and forced to chant Hindu slogans.

•On 25 February in Haridwar (Uttarakhand), a Muslim truck driver was asked his name at night; upon replying, he was attacked by a group and severely beaten, sustaining injuries requiring treatment at AIIMS. Police registered a case but denied a religious motive.

•In late February in Medchal (Telangana), a mentally ill Muslim youth found inside a temple premises was beaten by villagers after false social media claims that he had entered to offer namaz. Police registered a case against the victim; a court later directed his admission to a mental health hospital.

•On 28 February in Ahilyanagar (Maharashtra), cow vigilantes assaulted a Muslim cattle transporter, seized his cattle and vehicle, and accused him of transporting animals for slaughter.

•On 28 February in Bettiah (Bihar), a Muslim farmer returning home after purchasing a calf was stopped by self-styled cow vigilantes, accused of cattle trading, and severely beaten. The assault was filmed and shared on social media.

•On 28 February in Meerut (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim student at a university was chased and beaten by a group while fasting during Holi celebrations on campus. Videos showed him being punched and kicked.

•In early March in Solapur (Maharashtra), two Muslim men were attacked over WhatsApp posts related to the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb. Their heads and moustaches were forcibly half-shaved and they were made to kneel and apologise before pictures of Hindu deities.

•On 4 March in Hathras (Uttar Pradesh), a self-styled cow vigilante assaulted two Muslim tempo drivers, forced them to chant 'Jai Shri Ram,' and forcibly applied Holi colours on them.

•On 4 March in Barpeta (Assam), a Muslim youth was assaulted—in the presence of police—for allegedly entering the prayer hall of a satra (Vaishnavite monastery) during the Doul Mahotsav. He was subsequently detained by police.

•On 5 March in Basavakalyan, Bidar (Karnataka), two Muslim school teachers were assaulted. The incident triggered significant tension; thousands gathered outside the police station in protest.

•On 6 March in Jammu (Jammu and Kashmir), cow vigilantes torched a Gurjar Muslim family's pickup truck amid chants of 'Jai Shri Ram,' accusing them of cattle smuggling.

• On 6 March in Pune (Maharashtra), members of the Shiv Gaurakshak Dal forced a Muslim youth transporting cattle with legal documents to eat cow dung, accusing him of being a smuggler. A non-cognisable report was registered.

•On 8 March in Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh), five men attacked a mosque imam with a cricket bat and sticks on his way to prayers during Ramadan, after

- asking his name. He sustained serious head wounds. One suspect was arrested; an FIR was registered against all five named accused.

•On 16 March in Mustafabad, Northeast Delhi, two Muslim schoolboys were assaulted by a group of 40–45 attackers after being asked their names following Friday prayers. One suffered a broken nose, a deep head wound, and was hospitalised. An FIR was registered under Section 110 (attempt to commit culpable homicide) of the BNS.

•On 31 March in Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh), a Muslim man was stopped by Bajrang Dal members who beat him, accused him of 'love jihad,' forced him to chant Hindu slogans and declare all Hindu women his sisters, and extorted ₹9,000 from him. The assault was filmed and circulated on social media. The main accused was arrested the following day; police described the group as using religion as a pretext for extortion.

•On 2 April in Jagtial (Telangana), a 60-year-old Muslim man and his 16-year-old son were attacked by a saffron-clad mob of 15–20 for selling beef on Hanuman Jayanti. The mob dragged the son, beat both victims while chanting 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Jai Shivaji,' and tied the son to a pole. Videos circulated online; police identified four to five suspects.

•On approximately 3 April in Hubballi (Karnataka), a Muslim gym trainer was taken from his home by members of a Hindu caste community and Hindutva organisations, beaten, and handed to police over allegations of 'love jihad.' He was hospitalised with injuries.

•On 6 April in Hyderabad (Telangana), cattle traders transporting 14 oxen with valid documents were stopped by a group of 100–150 self-proclaimed cow vigilantes and assaulted with sticks and rods. One driver suffered a broken finger. The cattle were seized and sent to a gaushala. Three suspects were taken into custody.

•On 10 April in Madhepura (Bihar), two Muslim cattle traders were intercepted by 15–20 Bajrang Dal members, taken to a wooded area, and beaten for nearly an hour. Police then arrested the victims on charges of cow smuggling and cattle theft—despite five farmers confirming they had sold the cattle legally. The victims were jailed without adequate medical examination.

•On 17 April in Perambra (Kerala), madrasa students were assaulted and called 'terrorists.'

•On 23 April in Yavatmal (Maharashtra), two Muslim truck drivers transporting fruit were chased for 20–30 kilometres by a group of armed men and then attacked when stopped. One sustained serious skull and nose injuries and remained in the ICU. Police classified it as 'road rage' and applied lenient sections, despite ICU-level injuries; the victims' families alleged the case was being underplayed.

Christian advocacy groups document sharp escalation in anti-Christian hostility, with over 500 incidents in the first four months of 2026

The United Christian Forum (UCF), a national advocacy body that operates a helpline documenting hostility against Christians in India, recorded 531 incidents between January and mid-April 2026—more in approximately three and a half months than in the entirety of 2014, when the helpline logged 127 cases. The UCF's tally encompasses a broad range of hostile acts, from threats and harassment to physical assaults and the disruption of worship services; the figure follows 834 incidents recorded for the full year 2024. Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha—all governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) —featured prominently, with Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh alone accounting for more than half of all reported cases. Dalit and Adivasi (lower-caste and indigenous) Christians were identified as the worst affected groups, and many incidents were linked to accusations of religious conversion.

Separately, the Evangelical Fellowship of India's Religious Liberty Commission (EFI-RLC) documented 747 verified incidents of hostility against Christians in 2025, drawn from over 915 reported cases that underwent field verification. The full report, released in March 2026, found that Uttar Pradesh (217 incidents) and Chhattisgarh (177) together accounted for nearly half of all cases, followed by Rajasthan (51), Madhya Pradesh (47), and Haryana (38). Threats and harassment were the most common form (204 incidents), followed by physical violence (112), disruption of church services or prayer meetings (110), false accusations (98), and arrests (86). The commission cautioned that many incidents go unreported due to fear of reprisals or lack of accessible legal remedies.

Reported incidents during the period under review illustrate the patterns identified in UCF's and EFI-RLC's data. In Odisha—which had seen a wave of anti-Christian pogroms in Kandhamal district in 2008 and has experienced a resurgence of anti-minority hostility since the BJP came to power in 2024—members of a Hindu nationalist group in Dhenkanal district attacked a Christian pastor on 4 January, beating him, forcing him to consume cow dung, and parading him while compelling him to chant Hindu religious slogans. A police complaint was filed against the victim rather than the attackers; seven Christian families fled the area, and nine suspects were arrested only after more than two weeks. In Nabarangpur district, Hindu residents issued an ultimatum to approximately 30 tribal Christian families on 25 January demanding the relocation of an 18-year-old church; two youths were beaten. In February, in the same district, a 13-year-old Christian boy was denied burial in the village cemetery, with the standoff lasting some 20 hours before being resolved on condition that no religious symbol be placed on the gravestone.

In Chhattisgarh's Bastar division—a tribal-majority region that recorded among the highest numbers of anti-Christian incidents nationally—a campaign of coordinated intimidation targeting Adivasi Christians continued into the reporting period, with anti-Christian notices posted in multiple villages and pressure on families to undergo ghar wapsi ("homecoming"), a Hindu nationalist term for ritualised reconversion to Hinduism.

In Madhya Pradesh, a documented uptick in the targeting of Christians included physical assaults and the filing of false conversion cases through proxy complainants —a pattern in which third parties, rather than any alleged victim, lodge police complaints accusing Christians of conducting forced conversions. Anti-conversion laws—which now exist in over 12 Indian states and criminalise religious conversion alleged to have been carried out through force, fraud, or inducement—provide the legal backdrop against which much of this hostility unfolds. (Also see section on Arrests and Detentions for reports of arrests under anti-conversion legislation, and section on Religious Freedom for recent legislative developments including new anti-conversion bills in Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra.)

Resurgence of inter-ethnic violence in Manipur kills at least 15, including two children and a legislator

Inter-ethnic violence in Manipur—between the predominantly-Hindu Meitei community, which inhabits the state's valley districts, and the predominantly-Christian Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities of the surrounding hills—resumed with intensity during the reporting period, with at least fifteen people killed in multiple incidents, despite a change of government and disarmament efforts. Since the conflict erupted in May 2023, over 260 people have been killed and more than 58,000 displaced, with tens of thousands still living in relief camps.

President's Rule had been imposed in February 2025 following the resignation of Chief Minister N. Biren Singh, whose BJP-led government had been accused of siding with armed Meitei groups, enabling attacks on Kuki-Zo civilians and churches, and failing to ensure impartial protection. A leaked audio recording, which a private forensic laboratory assessed as a 93% voice match for Singh, had purportedly captured him claiming credit for how the conflict started and admitting to shielding individuals who had looted weapons from state armouries. A new BJP-led state government under Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand took office in February 2026, and the Meitei armed group Arambai Tenggol surrendered 307 looted weapons to state authorities—but according to the state's security adviser, fewer than 1,200 of an estimated 6,000 weapons looted from state armouries since May 2023 have been recovered.

Violence resumed almost immediately. In the first week of January, triple IED blasts in Bishnupur district injured two Meitei civilians; security sources alleged the devices had been planted in abandoned Meitei homes as traps targeting returnees. A bomb attack on a petrol pump in the same district forced the indefinite closure of all fuel stations in the valley. On approximately 22 January, a Meitei man was abducted and shot dead by unidentified assailants while visiting his Kuki-Zo wife in Churachandpur district; police reportedly suspect the involvement of the United Kuki National Army (UKNA), an insurgent group active in the area. The killing was filmed and circulated on social media. On 20 February, Kuki-Zo BJP legislator Vungzagin Valte died from injuries sustained when he was attacked by members of a Meitei militia—reportedly Arambai Tenggol—on a road in Imphal on 4 May 2023. In a letter to Prime Minister Modi written before his death, Valte described being "brutally attacked," sustaining severe injuries that left him "paralysed and handicapped," and warned that the Kuki-Zo community was being marginalised.

A significant development during the period was the expansion of the conflict to involve the Naga community, which had until recently remained neutral. In early February, at least 21 Kuki homes were torched in Ukhrul district following an alleged assault on a Tangkhul Naga man; hundreds of Kuki residents reportedly fled, and the internet was suspended across three districts. In March, two Kuki men went missing and were found dead in Kamjong district, prompting the retaliatory hostage-taking of 21 Naga civilians—reportedly including a wedding party—by Kuki villagers; the hostages were released after negotiations. Reports of coordinated attacks at three locations in Ukhrul on 19 March and a reported drone-delivered explosive attack on the Naga village of Mongkot Chepu on 23 March—during which two Naga farmers were also reportedly shot while working their fields—pointed to an escalation in the sophistication of militant operations in the hill districts.

April saw the most lethal single incident since the new government took office. On 7 April, a rocket-like projectile struck a home in Tronglaobi village, Bishnupur district —approximately one kilometre from a heavily guarded buffer zone—killing a five-year-old boy and a six-month-old baby; their mother was critically injured. According to Scroll.in, a mob of approximately 500 subsequently stormed a nearby CRPF camp, and security forces opened fire, killing three protesters and injuring several others. Five suspects from the United Kuki National Army (UKNLA), a banned insurgent group not party to the government's ceasefire agreements, were subsequently arrested in connection with the attack; the UKNLA denied involvement. On 18 April, suspected militants ambushed a civilian convoy on the Imphal-Ukhrul road, killing two Naga civilians including a retired Indian Army soldier; the NIA was ordered to investigate. On 24 April, three more people were killed—one Tangkhul Naga and two Kukis—in separate gunfights in Ukhrul district. Four Naga village guards were reportedly shot at Ringui village on 29 April.

The conduct of state authorities and security forces during the period continued to raise serious concerns. According to Manipur's home minister, 88 of the 272 companies of central paramilitary forces deployed in the state were withdrawn for election duties in West Bengal—a significant reduction in security cover during an active conflict. Multiple internet shutdowns were imposed, including across five districts following the Tronglaobi attack. On 25 April, security forces fired tear gas and baton-charged protesters marching to the Chief Minister's residence to demand a judicial probe into the CRPF firing and an end to ceasefire agreements with Kuki-Zo armed groups; over 22 people were reportedly injured. That the Tronglaobi projectile was reportedly fired from approximately 100 metres away—within a kilometre of a buffer zone guarded by the Army, central paramilitary forces, and state police—raised pointed questions about the effectiveness of the security apparatus. No convictions have been secured for any conflict-related violence since May 2023. On 10 January, a Kuki woman who had been gang-raped by men allegedly affiliated with the Meitei armed group Arambai Tenggol during the initial outbreak of violence in May 2023 died from injuries sustained in the assault. Despite the Central Bureau of Investigation having taken over the case in July 2023, charges against the accused are yet to be framed, and two identified perpetrators have been released on bail of Rs 30,000 (~ USD 360) each. (Also see section on Lack of Effective Remedy.)

The patterns documented above raise serious concerns under international human rights law, particularly in relation to the rights to life, security of person, freedom from torture and ill-treatment, and freedom of religion. Under the ICCPR and the Convention against Torture, states are required to exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, and punish violations by non-state actors—and to provide effective remedy to victims. The latest reports continue to point to failures on each count: perpetrators frequently operated with impunity or political protection, while victims faced police inaction, retaliatory criminal charges, or outright complicity by state authorities. Rather than reflecting isolated institutional failures, these patterns indicate a climate in which non-state violence against religious minorities is tolerated, and in many cases facilitated, by state action and inaction alike.

5. DISENFRANCHISEMENT AND DENATIONALIZATION

During the period under review, mass disenfranchisement of Muslims through India's nationwide 'Special Intensive Revision' of electoral rolls continued at an unprecedented scale, with over 56 million voters removed across 13 states and the exercise now expanding to cover the entire country. In parallel, Assam held elections on a gerrymandered constituency map that had reduced Muslim-majority seats from approximately 35 to 20, while a national delimitation bill that would have further entrenched the ruling party's electoral advantage was defeated in Parliament.

56 million+

voters removed from electoral rolls across 13 states through the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), now expanding to cover the entire country

1 in 6

registered voters in West Bengal — over 12 million citizens — were unable to cast a ballot in the April 2026 state elections

<2,000

of 3.4 million appeals against voter deletion were heard before polling began in West Bengal. Of those reviewed, 89% of deletions were overturned

43%

decrease in Muslim-majority assembly seats in Assam following communal gerrymandering — from approximately 35 to 20 out of 126 seats — despite Muslims comprising over 34% of the state's population

Mass disenfranchisement of Muslims continues nationwide as West Bengal holds elections on purged voter rolls

During the period under review, the Election Commission of India's (ECI) unprecedented nationwide 'Special Intensive Revision' (SIR) of electoral rolls—first documented in this tracker during its pilot in Bihar in mid-2025—continued to disenfranchise tens of millions of voters, with Muslims, women, and other marginalised communities among the worst affected. On 23 and 29 April, the eastern state of West Bengal held legislative assembly elections on rolls from which over 9 million names had been removed. A further 3.4 million citizens remained in adjudication limbo—flagged by the ECI's algorithmic tools but with appeals unheard—after the Supreme Court of India ruled that the mere pendency of an appeal did not confer the right to vote. In total, over 12 million registered voters—approximately one in six of the state's electorate—were unable to cast a ballot. Independent observers described the West Bengal election as 'one of the darkest moments in India's electoral history.'

West Bengal is the most acute manifestation of a nationwide exercise. As was witnessed in Bihar—where Muslims, approximately 17% of the population, accounted for roughly one-third of the 4.7 million voters removed, and the BJP-led alliance subsequently won 202 of 243 seats—the SIR has since been extended to 12 further states and union territories. Over 56 million voters have now been removed from electoral rolls across India: a scale of voter roll reduction without precedent since the introduction of universal adult franchise in 1950. In Uttar Pradesh—India's most populous state, with over 200 million people and elections expected in early 2027—20.5 million voters have been deleted. Preparations for a third and final phase, covering 22 additional states and union territories, are currently underway—bringing the total to 34: effectively nationwide.

Across every state where disaggregated data is available, the SIR has removed Muslim voters at rates far exceeding their share of the population—and available evidence indicates that this disproportion intensified at each successive stage of the process. In West Bengal, Muslim voters accounted for 34% of total deletions despite constituting approximately 27% of the state's population. At the final adjudication stage—where 2.7 million names were deleted out of 6 million sent for adjudication—a leading analyst estimates that 'nearly two-thirds of those deleted are from the minority community.' At the constituency level, in Nandigram, Muslims are 25% of the population but account for 95% of deleted names; in Bhabanipur, Muslims are 20% but account for 40% of deletions. At the booth level, in Bhabanipur booth 116, Muslims were 11% of those flagged as absent, shifted, or dead, but 72.2% of those flagged for 'logical discrepancies'—suggesting that the ECI's algorithmic tools, rather than routine administrative processes, drove the disproportionate impact. Geographically, the highest deletion numbers were concentrated in Muslim-majority border districts: Murshidabad (455,000), North 24 Parganas (325,000), and Malda (239,000). Ground reporting from border areas found that 'no one was cut in Hindu villages.'

In several states, these disparities were clearly the product of organised campaigns by BJP personnel. Under Indian electoral law, any citizen may file a 'Form 7' application to object to another voter's inclusion on the rolls—a mechanism intended for individual corrections, not mass targeting. In western Gujarat's Somnath constituency, over 15,000 Form 7 applications were filed by just 269 individuals—each submitting 50 or more forms, in violation of ECI guidelines—with objectors including the local BJP women's wing president. In Madhya Pradesh's Indore, over 11,000 applications were uploaded, with seven of the bulk objectors confirmed as BJP-affiliated; In Uttar Pradesh's Shamli district, 544 pre-printed Form 7 applications—all targeting Muslim residents of a single village—were traced to one applicant. In Assam, where a separate but analogous revision was conducted ahead of elections on 9 April, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (BJP) himself directed party workers to file Form 7 applications against Bengali-speaking Muslim residents, stating that '4–5 lakh Miyas will get deleted… my job is to make them suffer' ('Miya' being a derogatory term for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam; 'lakh' = 100,000).

The SIR has also disproportionately impacted women. In Bihar, women constituted nearly 60% of those excluded from draft voter rolls despite making up 47.8% of the electorate; in 43 of 243 assembly constituencies, the proportion of women among those excluded exceeded 60%. In Uttar Pradesh, the post-SIR registered voter sex ratio stands at just 834 women per 1,000 men—against a projected population ratio of 943—suggesting massive under-registration that is likely to fall heaviest on Muslim and marginalised women. The underlying cause is structural: the SIR's evidentiary requirements demand documents from a prescribed list that excludes widely held forms of identification, disproportionately burdening women—whose names frequently differ across documents due to marriage, and who are less likely to hold property records or formal employment documentation—as well as rural communities, migrant workers, Dalits, and Adivasis (India's Indigenous peoples). The human cost has also fallen on local officials: a report by the SPECT Foundation documented at least 33 deaths of Booth Level Officers (BLOs)—typically schoolteachers assigned to conduct door-to-door verification under compressed and unrealistic timelines—across six states since November 2025, including nine by suicide. No accountability or investigation outcomes have been reported.

Unlike routine electoral roll revisions, the SIR empowers local officials to refer 'suspected foreign nationals' for action under India's citizenship and immigration laws —effectively allowing the initiation of citizenship adjudication alongside what is formally a voter verification exercise. This replicates a model that has operated in Assam since the 1990s, where citizens flagged as 'D-voters' (doubtful voters) are referred to quasi-judicial Foreigners Tribunals (FTs) that have the power to strip them of citizenship. The legal architecture for expanding this nationwide is now in place: the newly enacted Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 empowers the central government to constitute FTs in any state or union territory, with powers of a first-class judicial magistrate including the authority to issue arrest warrants and send individuals to detention centres. While the Chief Justice of India remarked in court that 'the Election Commission cannot declare someone a foreigner unless a tribunal records such a finding,' no administrative firewall prevents referral, and no documented safeguard exists to prevent this pipeline from being activated. The risk is compounded by the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, which fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslim migrants from neighbouring countries—creating, in practice, a two-track system: Hindu residents of border areas can regularise their status through the CAA, while Muslim residents flagged by the SIR face potential referral to FTs with no equivalent pathway. Ground reporting from West Bengal's border districts documented this nexus directly: in Thakurnagar, members of the Namasudra community—a Hindu Scheduled Caste group—were using a CAA assistance centre to apply for citizenship certificates, while Muslim voters in the same districts were being deleted from electoral rolls. (Also see section on Forced Expulsions and Refoulement.)

The ECI deployed untested algorithmic tools to flag voters for deletion—tools that its own officials subsequently admitted to the Supreme Court were defective and produced 'variable results.' Despite this admission, the ECI reactivated the same software eight days later across 12 states. The tools flagged 36.6 million voters as 'suspects' across West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh alone, with an estimated false-

positive rate of 54%. The Supreme Court criticised the software's parameters as 'not based on ground realities.' The ECI told the Supreme Court that local officers were 'applying mind' before issuing deletion notices; an investigation by the Reporters' Collective found this misleading. The ECI's centralised software also stripped local Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) of their statutory power to reinstate voters, requiring instead that centrally appointed observers approve any restoration—effectively overriding a legal safeguard designed to protect against precisely this kind of mass error.

To date, no Indian court has ruled on the legality of the SIR. The principal challenge—filed after the Bihar pilot and heard over 29 days by the Supreme Court—was reserved for judgement in late January 2026 and remains undelivered. In the meantime, four states and one union territory have held elections on the basis of purged rolls, the SIR has been expanded nationwide, and over 56 million voters have been removed—all while the question of legality remains unanswered. In West Bengal, where 3.4 million appeals against deletion were filed, fewer than 2,000 were disposed of before polling began—and of the small number reviewed, approximately 89% of the ECI's original deletion decisions were overturned, suggesting the vast majority of deletions were wrongful. The Supreme Court refused to set a deadline for pending appeals, refused interim inclusion of voters whose cases had not been heard, and directed that parallel petitions before state High Courts be deferred—effectively foreclosing every available avenue of relief. West Bengal's Chief Minister argued in person before the Court on 4 February—reportedly the first sitting Chief Minister to do so—but failed to obtain a stay. By the time the Court delivers its judgement, the disenfranchisement it was asked to prevent will likely be irreversible. The ECI has announced the expansion of the SIR to 22 additional states and union territories from April 2026—including Delhi, Maharashtra, Jammu and Kashmir, and Karnataka—bringing the total effectively nationwide. In Uttar Pradesh, where 20.5 million voters have already been deleted and steep declines have been documented in Muslim-majority districts, conditions closely mirror the early stages of what unfolded in West Bengal. The state's elections are expected in early 2027. (Also see section on Lack of Effective Remedy.)

Assam holds elections on gerrymandered map as national delimitation bill is defeated in Parliament

On 9 April, the state of Assam held legislative assembly elections on constituency boundaries that had been redrawn in 2023 in ways that systematically diluted Muslim political representation. New reporting published during the period revealed the extent of the exercise: Muslim-majority constituencies were reduced from approximately 35 to 20 of the state's 126 seats, through techniques that one leading analyst described as 'communal gerrymandering' analogous to racial gerrymandering in the United States. The ruling BJP did not field a single Muslim candidate in the state, where Muslims constitute over 34% of the population.

Detailed analyses by Arshad Ahmed, Srinivas Kodali, and Safwat Zargar and Rokibuz Zaman documented the specific techniques employed. Muslim-majority seats were abolished and merged into Hindu-majority constituencies: Baghbar and Jania—both Muslim-majority seats in Barpeta district were scrapped and combined

into a single new seat, Mandia, with 281,000 voters. Muslim-decisive seats were reserved for Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe candidates, debarring Muslim representatives from contesting: Barpeta—which had elected Muslim legislators four times—was redrawn to a Hindu majority and reserved for SC; Nowboicha and Goalpara West were similarly reserved. Muslim voter pockets were split across multiple neighbouring Hindu-majority constituencies: Nowboicha's Muslim residents were divided into four seats. Conversely, Muslim voters were packed into oversized constituencies to dilute their per-vote weight: Dhubri now has 2,643,000 voters—against a state average of 1,735,000 per parliamentary seat. Kodali's geo-referencing of the redrawn boundaries further revealed that constituencies such as Mangaldoi do not even have continuous borders—'two distinct parts, geographically separated, have been made part of a single constituency.' A cabinet minister stated publicly that constituency boundaries had been redrawn so that 'there's no point for miyas (a pejorative for Bengali-speaking Muslims) to try and win it this time,' and Chief Minister Sarma claimed the delimitation would ensure the assembly is 'less affected by demographic changes' for two decades.

A similar delimitation exercise was completed in Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, where six seats were added to the Hindu-majority Jammu region and only one to Muslim-majority Kashmir—narrowing the latter's historic advantage from nine seats to four. The BJP won five of the six new Jammu seats in the 2024 assembly elections.

Separately, on 17 April, an attempt to extend delimitation nationwide was defeated in Parliament. The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026—which proposed expanding the Lok Sabha (lower house) from 543 to 850 seats on the basis of the 2011 Census—received 298 votes in favour and 230 against, falling 54 short of the required two-thirds majority. This was the first constitutional amendment brought by the Modi government to fail. The accompanying Delimitation Bill was subsequently withdrawn. Had it passed, the expansion would have disproportionately favoured northern states where the BJP draws its electoral base—Uttar Pradesh would have gained 9 seats, Bihar 6—at the expense of southern states that have controlled population growth, such as Tamil Nadu (losing 7) and Kerala (losing 5). The bill's defeat is significant, but the underlying political intent remains: the delimitation debate is expected to resume after the conclusion of the ongoing Census exercise. Ten leaders from nine opposition parties have challenged the Assam delimitation before the Supreme Court, calling the exercise 'vague, arbitrary and discriminatory,' but there is no indication of judicial action. In Assam itself, the damage is done: the redrawn map will govern the state's political representation for at least two decades.

These developments raise serious concerns under international human rights law, particularly with respect to the right to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections under Article 25 of the ICCPR, and the prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of political rights under Article 5(c) of the ICERD. The documented disproportionate impact on Muslims—at every stage of the SIR process, and through the explicit gerrymandering of constituency boundaries to prevent Muslim electoral success points to a pattern of religiously discriminatory disenfranchisement rather -

than legitimate electoral administration. The disproportionate exclusion of women engages Article 7 of CEDAW. The failure of the Supreme Court to rule on the legality of the SIR while elections proceed on purged rolls, and the collapse of the appellate process it established constitutes a denial of the right to an effective remedy under Article 2(3) of the ICCPR. The systematic and intentional character of the disenfranchisement—directed at a specific religious community through State administrative machinery, amplified by organised ruling-party campaigns, and compounded by gerrymandering with stated discriminatory intent—also raise concerns regarding persecution under Article 7(1)(h) of the Rome Statute.

6. FORCED EXPULSIONS AND REFOULEMENT

10,000–50,000
expulsions targeted by Assam Chief Minister Sarma for 2026, announced as an explicit policy goal ahead of state elections
According to Himanta Biswa Sarma

20–30
Bengali-speaking Muslims pushed back across the Bangladesh border every night, held by the BSF for up to 40 days before expulsion
According to Himanta Biswa Sarma

2,450+
Bengali-speaking Muslims expelled from Assam alone since the pushback campaign was launched in May 2025
According to Himanta Biswa Sarma

Mass unilateral expulsions of Bengali-speaking Muslims continue under nationwide 'pushback' campaign

The mass expulsion campaign launched by Indian authorities in May 2025—under which thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslims have been detained across India and forcibly pushed across the India-Bangladesh border without due process—continued throughout the first four months of 2026. Assam remained the epicentre, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announcing a target of 10,000-50,000 expulsions for the year, and claiming in mid-April that '20 to 30 illegal migrants' were being pushed back every night along the border. Alongside, the central government formalised the deportation infrastructure nationwide, directing all states to establish district-level task forces and barbed-wire 'holding centres.' Fresh accounts of wrongful expulsions continued to surface—including of Indian citizens pushed into Bangladesh and returned—and Rohingya refugees remained at acute risk of refoulement. On 9 April, Assam held state elections in which the 'pushback' campaign featured as an explicit electoral strategy; the BJP was returned to power in the state with a resounding majority, and elected to power for the first time in neighbouring West Bengal. (Also see section on Disenfranchisement and Denationalisation)

In a television interview in mid-April, Sarma described the expulsion method in unprecedented detail: the Border Security Force (BSF) holds individuals for up to 40 days, identifies stretches of the border where Bangladeshi guards are absent, and 'pushes' them across at night. On 2 January, Sarma claimed that over 2,000 had been expelled in the preceding three months. On 14 March, he acknowledged that he "cannot drive out 70 lakh [7 million] people" but would "create conditions for them to leave" and "harass them so much that they feel suffocated." In February, Assam's minister for Assam Accord implementation told the state assembly that 1,421 'illegal foreigners' had been 'sent back' in the 12 months ending January 2026. On 1 May, Bangladesh summoned India's acting High Commissioner to protest, calling Sarma's remarks "counterproductive" and "disparaging." Bangladesh's border guards told an independent investigator that they had recorded "no further push-in cases in 2026″—a claim contradicted by Sarma's own statements.

Fresh accounts published during the period continued to document the human cost of India's new expulsion regime. Taher Ali, a resident of Assam declared a 'foreigner' by a Foreigners' Tribunal, was pushed into Bangladesh three times between December 2025 and January 2026; each time, Bangladeshi authorities returned him, only for Indian forces to push him back again. His son told Scroll: "My country has declared my father a foreigner from Bangladesh. But Bangladesh has returned him twice. Then, which is our country? Do we have any country at all?" In a separate case, a 14-member Bengali Muslim family from Odisha, including children, was pushed into Bangladesh four times. A Netra News investigation found that Bangladesh's border guards had compiled a list of 120 individuals pushed in by Indian forces—all with Muslim names—and acknowledged the list as incomplete. On 24 April, the Supreme Court gave the central government a "last chance" to clarify its position on six individuals wrongfully deported from West Bengal in June 2025: the Centre had challenged a High Court repatriation order rather than comply, even after a Bangladeshi court declared the deportees to be Indian citizens.

Expulsions also continued from other states. Delhi Police data disclosed that 1,589 people, including 55 Rohingya, had been deported in the nine months to February 2026. In Mumbai, 400 were detained between January and March, and a new detention centre became operational on 26 March. In February, the Ministry of Home Affairs circulated a consolidated deportation policy directing all states to establish district-level task forces to "detect, identify and deport" suspected migrants; create 'holding centres' with 10-feet-high barbed-wire boundaries; cancel Aadhaar cards, driving licences, and PAN cards of those identified; and upload their biometrics to a new Foreigners Identification Portal. Border forces were instructed to push back those intercepted at the border "then and there."

Rohingya refugees continued to face particular risks. India's new immigration law, operationalised late last year, makes no distinction between refugees and other undocumented migrants, leaving Rohingya with no pathway to regularisation and no statutory protection against deportation. In West Bengal, a 20-year-old Rohingya mother and her five-month old infant were reportedly held in detention beyond their completed sentence in January. The woman was reportedly a victim of human trafficking and sexual violence. In Delhi, Rohingya refugees residing in informal settlements described living "a dog's life," denied basic livelihood by their undocumented status.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) wrote to India on 19 January reiterating its previously expressed concerns about the National Register of Citizens, forced evictions, hate speech, and use of force against Bengali-speaking Muslims. Notably, however, the letter did not address the forced expulsion campaign. These forced expulsions raise serious concerns under international human rights law and international criminal law.

The prohibition of refoulement—binding on India as customary international law regardless of its non-ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention has been breached with respect to Rohingya refugees. The systematic bypassing of individualized asses-

-sment, denial of legal representation, and absence of any opportunity to submit reasons against expulsion violate the safeguards required under Article 13 of the ICCPR and the prohibition of collective expulsion. In its report released in March 2026, the Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE) found reasonable basis to believe that the expulsions amount to deportation or forcible transfer as a crime against humanity under Article 7(1)(d) of the Rome Statute, characterising them as "both widespread and systematic" and part of "a state-wide campaign to disenfranchise and exclude." Deportation was further identified as one of the inhumane acts constituting apartheid under Article 7(1)(j). The Panel concluded that the measures documented in Assam—including forced expulsions, forced evictions, hate speech, and the systematic stripping of citizenship —are "directed towards building conditions for ethnic cleansing," with the Chief Minister's stated agenda being "the complete removal of Bengali-speaking Muslims from Assam."

7. ADVOCACY OF RELIGIOUS HATRED

2 in 5

official BJP social media posts in the Assam and West Bengal election campaigns met the United Nations definition of hate speech

(Bellingcat, March 2026)

1,318

in-person hate speech events targeting religious minorities documented across 21 states in 2025 — a 97% increase since 2023. 98% targeted Muslims

(India Hate Lab, 2025 annual report)

0

top BJP leaders prosecuted, disciplined, or institutionally sanctioned for hate speech

During the period under review, state assembly elections held in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala, and other states—with voting between 9 and 29 April and results declared on 4 May—drove an unprecedented spike in hate speech and AI-generated disinformation targeting Muslims. The ruling BJP deployed industrialised communal content at a scale not previously documented in Indian elections.

The developments in 2026 confirmed the continuation of trends tracked by India Hate Lab (IHL), a project of the Center for the Study of Organized Hate. IHL's 2025 annual report documented 1,318 in-person hate speech events targeting religious minorities—primarily Muslims—across 21 Indian states: a 13 per cent increase from 2024 (1,165 events), and a 97 per cent increase from 2023 (668 events). Ninety-eight per cent of documented speeches (1,289) targeted Muslims. Approximately 88 per cent of all incidents occurred in BJP-ruled states, NDA coalition states, or BJP-administered Union Territories—a 25 per cent increase from 2024. Half of all documented speeches invoked conspiracy theories such as 'love jihad', 'land jihad', and 'population jihad'; 308 included explicit calls for violence.

Two independent investigations published in March–April 2026 documented the BJP's use of hate speech and AI-generated disinformation through official party accounts during the state election campaigns.

Bellingcat analysed 499 BJP social media posts in Assam and West Bengal and found that nearly two in five met the United Nations' definition of hate speech, with the largest category targeting Bengali-origin Muslims as 'infiltrators'. Another report by the Netherlands-based Diaspora in Action for Human Rights and Democracy (DAHRD) described the Assam campaign as "the first industrialised AI disinformation operation in an Indian state election," identifying over 400 AI-generated posts with a combined 45.4 million views. By contrast, posts analysed from the Indian National Congress and the Trinamool Congress included AI-generated imagery but none met the hate speech threshold. The AI content included deepfakes fabricating Congress chief ministerial candidate Gaurav Gogoi as a "Pakistani agent and Muslim sympathiser," and AI-generated intimate videos depicting his wife, a private individual. The material was distributed through official BJP accounts, including the verified handle of a sitting cabinet minister.

No meaningful enforcement action followed. DAHRD documented 119 breaches of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)—the Election Commission of India's code governing political conduct during elections—including 15 attributed to Chief Minister Sarma; none resulted in action. Social media platforms removed zero posts; Meta's AI-labelling policy produced zero labels on 172 AI-flagged posts. DAHRD noted that the BJP's West Bengal branch deployed similar messaging during the same elections.

The BJP's top political leadership—holders of India's highest constitutional offices—continued to personally drive the dehumanisation of Muslims. The speeches highlighted below represent only a fraction of these leaders' utterances during the period under review: each made dozens of campaign speeches across poll-bound states, virtually all built around the same core themes—branding Muslims as 'infiltrators' (ghuspaithiya), invoking fabricated demographic threats, and calling for their identification, removal, and social exclusion:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi deployed the term ghuspaithiya (infiltrator) across at least six speeches between January and February 2026**—at election rallies in West Bengal and Assam, at a BJP party event in New Delhi, and in Parliament. His messaging followed a consistent pattern previously documented: Muslims framed as 'infiltrators' driving a 'demographic shift' that threatens national security, youth livelihoods, and tribal land rights; the political opposition accused of protecting them for electoral gain; and calls for their identification and deportation. At Malda on 17 January, he alleged that infiltration had altered the local dialect and fuelled communal riots, declaring that "developed and prosperous countries… are removing infiltrators" and that "it is equally necessary to remove infiltrators from West Bengal." The following day, at Hooghly, he demanded that infiltrators who had settled "by forging documents" be "identified and sent back to their countries." In Parliament on 5 February, during the Motion of Thanks debate, he alleged that courts were being "pressured to protect ghuspaithiyas"—a reference to legal challenges against the SIR (see section on Disenfranchisement and Denationalisation)—and claimed that infiltrators were "stealing the rights of the country's youth" and "grabbing the land of Adivasis."

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah escalated similar rhetoric across at least six speeches during the period**, explicitly linking voter roll purges to threatened physical removal. At Mathurapur, West Bengal, on 2 March, he declared that "Bengal must be made infiltration-free" and warned: "only names are being deleted now—they would be removed from the state." As elections approached, his language intensified: at Kaliabor, Assam, on 2 April, he claimed 64 lakh 'infiltrators' were present across seven Assam districts; at Sribhumi on 7 April, he pledged to "remove infiltrators from Assam, one by one"; at Dum Dum, West Bengal, on 22 April, he promised to "deport infiltrators one by one"; and at Balagarh on 23 April, he declared that infiltrators were "eating away the jobs of Bengal's youth" and would be "selectively rooted out."

- **Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath made speeches targeting Muslims across at least three states during the period.** At Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, on 10 February, he invoked the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid—a 16th-century mosque destroyed by Hindu extremist mobs, on the site of which the BJP-led government subsequently built a Hindu temple—declaring that "those dreaming of the day of Qayamat [the Islamic Day of Judgement] will rot away" and that the mosque "will never be rebuilt till Doomsday." In April, campaigning outside his home state ahead of state elections, he deployed the 'infiltrator' and 'jihad' rhetoric at multiple rallies in Barpeta, Assam, and Kalyani and Hooghly, West Bengal, calling for these states to be "freed" from 'love jihad' and 'land jihad'—fabricated conspiracy theories alleging that Muslims seduce Hindu women and systematically acquire land and property as part of a coordinated demographic takeover.

- **Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma**, who was re-elected to power with a resounding majority, **deployed the most sustained and vicious of any leader during the period.** On 27 January, he stated in a nationally televised interview: "my job is to make the Miya people suffer," adding that "4–5 lakh Miyas will get deleted" through the SIR. Days earlier, on 25 January, he had openly admitted that the SIR "targets only Bengali-speaking Muslims" and was "aimed at giving them trouble." On 5 February, he called for the complete social and economic ostracisation of the community, urging Assamese people: "Don't give them land, don't give them rickshaws, don't give them thelas [pushcarts]." On 29 March, ahead of elections, he pledged to "break the very backbone of the Bangladeshi Miyas." During campaign rallies in West Bengal in late March, he declared that "Hindus from Bangladesh are refugees; Muslims are infiltrators"—a distinction that explicitly the discriminatory logic of the CAA-SIR framework (see sections on Disenfranchisement and Denationalisation and Forced Expulsions and Refoulement). On 7 February, the BJP's official Assam account shared an AI-generated video depicting Sarma shooting at Muslims at point-blank range, captioned "foreigner-free Assam" and "why did you not go to Pakistan?" Sarma stated publicly that he would repost the video, this time labelling the figures as 'Bangladeshi.'

A September 2024 UN Special Procedures allegation letter had highlighted identical rhetoric by these same officials, finding it "likely to lead to further hostility, discrimination and potentially violence" against India's Muslims. The Indian government is yet to respond, and none of the officials named have been investigated or prosecuted. The Supreme Court's 2022-2023 directives requiring state governments to take suo motu action in hate speech cases remained unheeded across the country. No state police force is known to have registered a case against any of the officials named above; and as mentioned previously, the Election Commission took no action despite documented breaches of the Model Code of Conduct; and the Supreme Court itself declined to hear petitions challenging Sarma's rhetoric, directing petitioners instead to the Gauhati High Court. (See section on Lack of Effective Remedy.)

Other state-level BJP chief ministers, cabinet ministers, and elected representatives deployed identical dehumanising rhetoric across multiple states during the period, in several cases escalating to explicit calls for violence:

- **Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was named India's top hate speech offender** of 2025 by India Hate Lab, which documented 71 anti-Muslim speeches by him during the year. On 27 January 2026, addressing a Republic Day event, Dhami publicly embraced the designation: "An American NGO has put me at number one for the most hate speeches… should there be illegal infiltration in Uttarakhand? Should there be forced conversion?… if I bring up these things and you call it hate speech then I accept it." Throughout the period under review, Dhami continued to invoke other unfounded fabricated conspiracy theories—'love jihad', 'land jihad', and 'thook jihad', the last a baseless claim that Muslims systematically contaminate food by spitting in it—reframing each as a legitimate governance concern.

- **West Bengal Leader of Opposition(BJP)** Suvendu Adhikari, widely expected to become the state's next Chief Minister following the party's election victory(now Chief Minister), used the campaign to threaten Muslim migrant workers from his constituency. At a rally in Nandigram on 14 April, he warned Muslim workers employed in BJP-ruled states—Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha — to "mend your ways… so that there are no problems after May 4," explicitly leveraging their economic dependence on states governed by his party. On 29 April, a polling day, when surrounded by opposition supporters at a Kolkata polling booth, he dismissed them as "all Bangladeshi Muslims." In remarks made after the election results were announced, Adhikari credited the BJP's landslide to a "Hindu consolidation" and claimed that 15 million 'infiltrators' were present on West Bengal's electoral rolls.

- **Maharashtra BJP minister Nitesh Rane,** speaking at a Ram Navami procession in Malvani, Mumbai, on 26 March—organised amid communal tensions over the installation of saffron flags near a mosque—threatened to "gouge out the eyes" of anyone who looked askance at the saffron flag, and "play marbles with them." He declared that "this is a Hindu Rashtra—this is not anyone's father's Pakistan" and described madrasas as "centres for making terrorists." A complaint was filed the following day; however, despite twelve prior FIRs against Rane in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region—five in 2024 alone—no case was registered for this event.

- **T Raja Singh, a Telangana BJP MLA and serial hate speech offender** whose 2022 party suspension was revoked ahead of state elections in 2023, delivered incendiary speeches across three states during the period. At a rally organised by the Bajrang Dal in Chhindwara, Madhya Pradesh, on 16 February, he declared that "each of my Bajrangis could behead 10 Bangladeshis," adding: "I have only one demand — there should be no case and no FIR." At a gathering in Mandvi, Surat, on 8 March, he referred to Muslims as "insects" and "enemies," praised bulldozer demolitions targeting Muslim properties, demanded that Muslims not be permitted to live near temples, and called on Prime Minister Modi to introduce a population control law targeting Muslims —proposing rewards for officials who sterilise the most 'gol-topiwallas', a derogatory term for Muslims referencing the Islamic prayer cap.

On 4 April, he addressed a gathering in Biloli, Nanded district, Maharashtra, in defiance of a police notice explicitly prohibiting inflammatory statements and listing specific slurs he was forbidden from using. He nevertheless called for madrasas to be demolished with bulldozers, likening them to breeding grounds for terrorism. Police filed a case under India's criminal procedure code, but made no arrest.

Other high-profile Hindu nationalist figures with large public followings also continued to deliver inflammatory speeches targeting Muslims at public events during the period:

•**Yati Narsinghanand**, a far-right monk based in Uttar Pradesh with a long record of incendiary anti-Muslim rhetoric and multiple active criminal cases against him, delivered speeches at gatherings across western UP in January 2026. At a meeting of a businessmen's collective in Muzaffarnagar, he called for a complete economic and social boycott of Muslims, urged Hindus to arm themselves with guns and revolvers—even without licences—and declared that he would "eliminate Muslims from the earth." He repeated his call on Hindus to form organisations modelled on the Taliban and ISIS. Days later, at a gathering in Baghpat, he described Islam as a "cancer on the earth" and reiterated his desire to form militant groups modelled on ISIS and the Taliban. No police action was reported in connection with either event.

•Suresh Chavhanke, editor-in-chief of Sudarshan News, addressed multiple public rallies. At a gathering in Meerut in early February, he warned Hindus to "die and kill" to prevent what he termed 'Islamicstan,' invoking fabricated conspiracy theories including 'Ghazwa-e-Hind' and 'love jihad,' and repeating the slogan 'batoge to katoge'—a phrase commonly used to warn Hindus that division will lead to their annihilation at Muslim hands. Later that month, at another rally in Faridabad, he called AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi a "virus" and fearmongered about Rohingya and Bangladeshi 'infiltrators,' calling for a boycott of Muslims. In separate remarks made in Yangon, he praised Myanmar for "eliminating its Muslim problem"—a reference to the military's campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya, which the UN has described as bearing the hallmarks of genocide. In September 2025, the central Ministry of Education had approved a government-funded internship for 100 students at Sudarshan News, the television channel led by Chavhanke.

Grassroots campaigns of intimidation and communal hostility targeting Muslims in their everyday lives also continued across the country during the period. The following reported incidents are illustrative, and by no means exhaustive.

•In Kotdwar, Uttarakhand, on 26 January—India's Republic Day—members of the Bajrang Dal harassed an elderly Muslim shopkeeper over the name of his shop, insisting he remove the word "Baba" on the grounds that it had Hindu connotations. A local gym owner, Deepak Kumar, intervened and told the group that his own name was "Mohammad Deepak"—a gesture of solidarity with Muslims that was widely shared online. Rather than acting against the mob, police registered a criminal case against Kumar based on a complaint filed by the Hindutva activists. A man in Bihar subsequently posted a video announcing a bounty of ₹200,000 for Kumar's killing; he was detained. On 20 March, the Uttarakhand High Court refused to quash the FIR against Kumar, dismissed his plea for police protection—ruling that a person under investigation "cannot pray for police protection"—and imposed a gag order restricting him from commenting on the case on social media.

•Separately, in Bhonkera village, Uttar Pradesh, pamphlets left at the doorsteps of Muslim homes on 1 January warned residents to ***"vacate the village within 24 hours or be burned alive,"*** signed with Hindu supremacist slogans. The village's roughly fifteen Muslim families, who have lived alongside a Hindu majority for six generations, reported that family members now take turns staying awake at night. An FIR was registered on 2 January against unidentified persons; no arrests have been made. In Raebareli, also in Uttar Pradesh, a public event in mid-January called for the "open genocide of Muslims and Christians"; an FIR against seven individuals was registered only on 27 January, a week later. In February, a YouTube channel with ties to local BJP leaders in Telangana targeted Muslim street vendors selling snacks at a tribal festival, accusing them of 'food jihad'—a baseless conspiracy theory alleging that Muslims deliberately contaminate food sold to Hindus—and forcing one visibly distressed vendor to eat his own product on camera to "prove" it was safe. On 6 April, caged pigs were placed outside Muslim homes in Delhi's Tri Nagar neighbourhood.

India's mainstream media continued to play a central role in amplifying and normalising anti-Muslim narratives during the reporting period—both through active platforming and through conspicuous omission.

Multiple television channels, amplified by Maharashtra minister and BJP leader Nitesh Rane—who coined the term 'corporate jihad' and called for preferential hiring of Hindus—turned a workplace harassment case at a Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) BPO unit in Nashik, Maharashtra, into a communal conspiracy narrative centred on a Muslim woman who reportedly had nothing to do with the underlying allegations. Nine FIRs were filed in late March against TCS employees following allegations of sexual harassment and religious coercion against a male colleague. Nida Khan, a 26-year-old process associate with no managerial or recruitment role, was named in only one FIR—and only for allegedly making remarks about Hindu deities. Yet prime-time coverage recast her as the 'mastermind' and 'kingpin' of a purported conversion syndicate. A detailed examination by Alt News of all nine FIRs found that none of the claims broadcast on television—that Khan was an HR manager who suppressed complaints, facilitated sexual exploitation, and orchestrated a conversion racket—appeared in any police record. TCS itself clarified that Khan held no leadership or recruitment role and that its internal review had found no complaints of the nature alleged. A fact-finding team from the Association for Protection of Civil Rights (APCR) found no evidence of organised conversion and noted that the term 'corporate jihad' had emerged entirely from media commentary, not from any official record. Newslaundry separately reported that Hindu nationalist organisations had been involved from the case's inception, with a local Shiv Sena leader acknowledging that Hindu groups had 'counselled' the first complainant for several days before accompanying her to file the FIR. Khan, who was pregnant, was suspended by TCS on 9 April; a Nashik sessions court denied her anticipatory bail on 2 May.

•**Separately, in March 2026, the India Today Conclave**—one of the country's most prominent annual media events—invited Laura Loomer, an American far-right activist who has publicly called Islam "a cancer on the world" and declared Islamophobia "a hoax," as a featured speaker. At the 13–14 March event, Loomer offered a qualified apology for past anti-Indian remarks while recasting herself as a defender of Hindu rights— positioning her anti-Muslim rhetoric within a narrative of alleged persecution by Muslims. The decision to platform Loomer stood in stark contrast to the treatment of foreign academics and commentators critical of the Indian government: as Alt News documented, several prominent international scholars have been denied entry to India in recent years, while Loomer—whose views aligned with the ruling dispensation's ideological commitments was welcomed.

•A February 2026 analysis by Newslaundry also highlighted mainstream media's systematic failure to report on communal targeting across multiple states, noting that attacks on Muslims in Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Uttar Pradesh, and Mumbai had gone largely uncovered by major outlets. This pattern of complicity through omission—where the targeting of minorities is rendered invisible by editorial indifference—operates alongside the more visible amplification of anti-Muslim content documented elsewhere in this section.

Repeat hate speech offenders, at all levels, continued to evade accountability. Not one of the leaders whose speeches are documented in this section has faced criminal prosecution, disciplinary action, or meaningful institutional sanction of any kind.

On 16 February, the Supreme Court declined to entertain petitions seeking an investigation against Assam Chief Minister Sarma over his recent anti-Muslim remarks—highlighted above—directing petitioners instead to the Gauhati High Court. On 29 April, the Supreme Court dismissed a case against BJP leaders Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma—both documented extensively as having led chants of 'desh ke gaddaro, goli maaro saalo ko' (shoot dead the traitors to the nation) at public events weeks before communal violence in Delhi killed 53 people, mostly Muslims, in 2020; the Court remarked that the speeches disclosed no "cognizable offence" and were "not directed against any specific community." On 13 March, a Delhi court dismissed a plea seeking an FIR against Kapil Mishra—another BJP leader whose public ultimatum in February 2020 is widely regarded as a proximate trigger for the same episode—ruling that registration of an FIR was "legally impermissible."

In early May, Sarma was re-elected to power in Assam with a resounding majority. Thakur remains a Member of Parliament, while Verma and Mishra were both elevated in 2025 as cabinet ministers in the Delhi state government.

8. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

13

Indian states now have laws restricting religious conversion, after Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh enacted new statutes in March 2026

402

complaints of unlawful conversion actually received by Maharashtra in a year, against a minister's public claim of over 100,000 cases to justify the new law

RTI disclosure

7th year

in a row that congregational prayers were barred at Srinagar's Jama Masjid on the holiest Friday of Ramadan

600+

Muslim religious structures demolished in Uttarakhand alone by April 2026, predominantly shrines and mazars

Uttarakhand state authorities

► Anti-conversion laws across India

11 states have active laws restricting religious conversion; two more have passed laws not yet in force

Active anti-conversion law (11 states)

1. Himachal Pradesh: Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 2019

Enacted: 2019

Replaced the earlier 2006 Act with stricter provisions.

2. Uttarakhand

Uttarakhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2018

Enacted: 2018

3. Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2021 (amended 2024)

Enacted: 2021

Commonly referred to as the "love jihad" law. Amended in 2024 to increase penalties to life imprisonment for marriage-based conversions involving deception.

4. Haryana

Haryana Prevention of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2022

Enacted: 2022

5. Rajasthan

Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Act, 2025

Enacted: 2025

Replaced earlier 2006 ordinance. Came into force 29 October 2025. Includes provisions for property forfeiture and demolition; currently being challenged before the Supreme Court.

6. Gujarat

Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003

Enacted: 2003

Amended in 2021 to introduce stricter penalties and provisions against "love jihad".

7. Madhya Pradesh

Madhya Pradesh Dharma Swatantrya Adhiniyam, 1968

Enacted: 1968

One of the earliest anti-conversion statutes. Amended in 2020 and 2021 to add stricter penalties.

8. Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh Freedom of Religion Act, 2026

Enacted: 2026

Replaced the inherited 1968 Madhya Pradesh law. Passed 19 March 2026; signed by the governor in April 2026. Among the strictest in the country: 7–10 years for standard offences, up to life imprisonment for "mass conversion" of even two people.

9. Karnataka

Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022

Enacted: 2022

10. Odisha

Odisha Freedom of Religion Act, 1967

Enacted: 1967

The oldest anti-conversion law in India, predating all others by over a decade.

11. Jharkhand

Jharkhand Freedom of Religion Act, 2017

Enacted: 2017

- Maharashtra

Maharashtra Dharma Swatantrya (Freedom of Religion) Bill, 2024

Enacted: 2024

- Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act, 1978

Enacted: 1978

Passed in 1978 but implementing rules have never been notified, making the law unenforceable. In September 2024 the Gauhati High Court directed the state to finalise rules within six months; a high-powered committee is currently drafting them. In February 2025, 200,000 Christians protested against the law's revival.

> During the first four months of 2026, BJP-led central and state governments further intensified restrictions on the religious freedom of minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians. The period saw two states—Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh—enact new or significantly toughened anti-conversion laws, Gujarat pass a Uniform Civil Code that overrides Muslim personal law while exempting tribal communities, an escalation in the criminalisation of Muslim worship in Uttar Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir, and continuing selective demolitions of Muslim religious structures across multiple states.

BJP-governed states continue enacting and expanding anti-conversion laws

During the period under review, two BJP-governed states—Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh—enacted new or significantly toughened anti-conversion legislation, even as the Supreme Court was hearing consolidated challenges to existing laws. Separately, Gujarat proposed marriage registration rules designed to police interfaith unions.

> •Maharashtra passed the Freedom of Religion Act, 2026 on 16 March, which has since received gubernatorial assent and awaits the President's signature. If signed, Maharashtra will become the 13th Indian state with an active anti-conversion law. The legislation prescribes up to seven years' imprisonment and fines of Rs 5 lakh, requires 60 days' prior notice to authorities before any conversion, and—uniquely among Indian states—grants police the power to initiate investigations suo motu, even without a complaint from the alleged victim. It also criminalises conversion through "brainwashing through the medium of education"—a phrase critics say is undefined and allows arbitrary interpretation by authorities. AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi described the law as "worse than the worst of such laws." The government provided no -

evidence of the problem the law claims to address: a right-to-information request had previously revealed that a government committee received only 402 complaints in a year, against a minister's public claim of over 100,000 cases. Article 14 documented how the law was the culmination of more than three years of coordinated Hindu nationalist vigilantism involving Bajrang Dal "sleeper cells," dozens of hate-speech rallies led by BJP leaders, and a sustained campaign to criminalise interfaith relationships.

- Chhattisgarh passed the Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026 on 19 March, replacing its 1968 statute. The governor has signed the law. Analysts described it as the strictest anti-conversion framework in the country: individual conversions attract 7 to 10 years' imprisonment; conversions involving minors, women, or Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe persons attract 10 to 20 years; "mass conversion"—defined as even two people at the same time—carries 10 years to life imprisonment; repeat offenders face life. The law explicitly exempts reconversion to Hinduism from the definition of "conversion," covers online activity for the first time, shifts the burden of proof onto the accused, and mandates special courts and special prosecutors.

- Gujarat proposed an amendment to its marriage registration law in February 2026 requiring that blood relatives be notified by registered post and marriage details published in newspapers and social media 30 days before registration. While not an anti-conversion law as such, the amendment subjects interfaith couples to a form of surveillance. The Deputy Chief Minister cited "love jihad" as the justification. High courts in Rajasthan, Delhi, and Punjab and Haryana have previously struck down identical notification requirements in their anti-conversion laws as unconstitutional and violative of the right to privacy.

Home Minister Amit Shah, separately, publicly demanded another anti-conversion law for the state of Punjab.

Gujarat becomes second Indian state to pass a Uniform Civil Code, overriding Muslim personal law while exempting tribal communities

On 24 March 2026, the BJP-led Gujarat Legislative Assembly passed a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), becoming the second state—after Uttarakhand in 2024—to replace religion-specific personal laws with a common legal framework governing marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The bill, introduced by Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel and modelled closely on the Uttarakhand code, was awaiting the Governor's assent at the time of writing.

The code bans polygamy (up to seven years' imprisonment), criminalises extra-judicial divorce including triple talaq (up to three years), overrides Islamic inheritance and succession principles, and requires all marriages to be registered within 60 days on pain of a Rs 60,000 fine. It also mandates the registration of live-in relationships with local authorities, replicating provisions from the Uttarakhand code that are already under constitutional challenge. Scheduled Tribes are entirely exempt from the code—a carve-out that critics say exposes the law's discriminatory intent, since it overrides Muslim personal law while protecting tribal customs on identical grounds of community tradition. Muslims constitute 9.67 per cent of Gujarat's population but hold no Muslim-majority Assembly seat; Scheduled Tribes constitute 14.8 per cent and hold 27 reserved seats.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board termed the bill "constitutionally flawed, legally untenable, and fundamentally violative of religious freedom," and announced it would challenge the legislation in the Gujarat High Court. Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind separately announced a Supreme Court challenge, identifying its inheritance provisions as directly conflicting with Islamic law.

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh and Kashmir intensify restrictions on Muslim worship

During the period under review, state authorities—particularly in BJP-governed Uttar Pradesh, and in Jammu and Kashmir where police answer to the central government-appointed Lieutenant General—escalated the criminalisation of Muslim prayer documented in previous editions, extending restrictions beyond public spaces into private residences and educational institutions.

- In Uttar Pradesh, police in Bareilly detained and fined 12 Muslim men in January for offering Friday prayers inside a private home—with the owner's permission. Legal experts described the action as "legally untenable", and the Allahabad High Court issued contempt notices to the district's top police and administrative officials for preventing worship on private property.

- In Sambhal, authorities capped mosque attendance at 20 worshippers during Ramadan, citing security concerns—a restriction the High Court struck down, ruling that officials who cannot maintain order while permitting worship "should either resign or seek transfer." Mosques in Sambhal and Shahjahanpur were once again covered with tarpaulin ahead of Hindu festival processions. A police officer in Sambhal told Muslims to "go to Iran" during a meeting ahead of Eid. At Lucknow University, students were required to furnish personal bonds of Rs. 50,000 (~ USD 590) each for offering prayers at a Mughal-era structure on campus.

- In Shravasti, eight men were arrested twice—the second round following direct intervention by a local ruling-party youth leader—for holding a Ramadan iftar meal in a forested area; all eight subsequently fled their homes. In Mainpuri, a police officer threatened to "bury" worshippers attempting to offer Eid prayers at a decades-old prayer ground, relenting only after local Hindu residents intervened in their support. (Also see section on Arrests and Detentions.)

In Jammu and Kashmir—where police forced report not to the elected state government but to the centrally-appointed Lieutenant Governor under the terms of the territory's 2019 reorganisation—congregational prayers were again barred at Srinagar's historic Jama Masjid on the holiest Friday of Ramadan, for the seventh consecutive year. The mosque's chief cleric, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, was once again placed under house arrest; he compared the closure to Israeli restrictions on al-Aqsa in Jerusalem. In a significant escalation, police launched a Valley-wide exercise requiring mosques to disclose detailed information about clerics, funding, and ideological affiliation, along with personal data including bank details, phone identifiers, social media accounts, and travel histories—a move religious bodies and political leaders described as unprecedented surveillance of Muslim religious institutions.

Non-state actors too continued to target Muslim worship, particularly during episodes of communal violence (see section on Torture: Non-State Actors). Separately, the Delhi High Court reprimanded a Hindu organisation for filing repeated public interest litigation petitions targeting mosques and shrines.

BJP-governed states continue targeting Muslim places of worship and other religious structures

In the first four months of 2026, authorities across India continued selectively demolishing Muslim religious structures—including mosques, madrassas (Islamic schools), mazars (tombs and shrines) and graveyards—typically citing unauthorised construction, with no comparable action reported against Hindu sites.

- Delhi: On the night of 7 January, authorities in the Turkman Gate area of Old Delhi—a predominantly Muslim neighbourhood—deployed some 20 bulldozers to demolish structures near the historic Turkman Gate mosque, including parts of the century-old Faiz-e-Elahi Masjid complex. Residents who protested were met with tear gas and baton charges; over 25 were detained. The Delhi High Court sought responses from authorities, but the demolitions had already been carried out.

- Uttar Pradesh: The UP government continued its state-wide campaign of demolitions targeting Muslim religious structures. Sambhal district—where police shot dead 5 Muslim protesters during a court-ordered survey of a historic mosque in November 2024—remained a focal point. On 13 February, a madrasa was bulldozed alongside 10 Muslim homes declared illegal. On 12 March, a court ordered the demolition of a mosque and shrine and imposed a fine of nearly ₹7 crore (~US$830,000) on the imams. On 17 April, four bulldozers demolished a mosque with a 35-foot minaret, an eidgah (open-air prayer ground), and an imambara (congregation hall) over two days, with residents describing the area as a "police cantonment".

Elsewhere in the state, a mosque in Bareilly was demolished on 9 February despite a pending hearing at the state High Court—revenue records showed the structure had existed since 1968. On 30 March, a 12-year-old mosque in Sitapur was razed at 3 am using three bulldozers and 500 police. On 12 January, a shrine in Deoria was demolished following a court order prompted by a ruling-party leader's 2019 complaint; residents who criticised the demolition on social media were subsequently arrested. In January, authorities in Bahraich moved to remove 10 mazars near a government medical college, and in Aligarh, a 28-year-old Muslim graveyard was demolished after a complaint by the Hindu nationalist organisation Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). In April, a madrasa in Sant Kabir Nagar was demolished after authorities linked it to a UK-based preacher apparently under investigation by counter-terrorism agencies.

- Uttarakhand: In February, a mazar near a Hindu temple in Haridwar was razed citing "illegality" and "security threat." By April, authorities reported the removal of over 600 structures across the state—predominantly Muslim shrines and mazars.

•Gujarat: In March, authorities in Bharuch district demolished a dargah (Sufi shrine) and two mazars, claiming they stood on government grazing land. Local Muslims questioned the timing and fairness of the action.

The ***pattern was not confined to BJP-governed states***. In Telangana, ***governed by the opposition Indian National Congress***, an 800-year-old dargah was demolished on 26 February to make way for a Hindu temple expansion project, despite formal objections from the state Waqf Board—the statutory body responsible for overseeing Muslim religious endowments.nversion laws were also flagged by the UN Human Rights Committee in its July 2024 Concluding Observations on India.

The developments highlighted above raise serious concerns under international human rights law as well as domestic constitutional guarantees relating to religious freedom. The right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion—including the freedom to manifest one's religion in worship, observance, practice, and teaching—is protected under Article 18 of the ICCPR, to which India is a party. Any limitations on this right must be prescribed by law and necessary for the protection of public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights of others; they must not be applied in a discriminatory manner. The systematic pattern of legislative restrictions, criminalisation of worship, and selective demolitions documented above appears to fall well outside these permissible limitations.

9. DISCRIMINATION IN ACCESS TO ECONOMIC, SOCIAL & CULTURE RIGHTS

Legislating segregation

- Rajasthan passed law (6 March) criminalising Muslim property purchases in designated areas; 3–5 years' imprisonment
- Gujarat expanded its Disturbed Areas Act on 25 March
- NBER study (1.5M neighbourhoods): 26% of India's Muslims live in 80%+ Muslim areas with worse public services

Dismantling Muslim education

- Uttarakhand abolished Madrasa Board; replacement has just 2 Muslim members out of 12
- UP Anti-Terrorism Squad investigating ~4,000 madrassas
- J&K: ~300 of ~350 Jamaat-linked schools seized, affecting ~100,000 students

Discrimination in the classroom

- Indore school segregated Muslim students into sections labelled 'M' with separate events
- Kashmiri nursing students in Andhra Pradesh faced hijab and Ramadan restrictions
- Bengaluru professor called Muslim student 'terrorist' 13 times before suspension

► 19+ episodes of punitive and/or arbitrary demolition of Muslim properties (Jan – Apr 2026)

An estimated 2,300+ structures affected in reported incidents

During the period under review, BJP-governed state authorities continued to discriminate against Muslims in access to housing, education, and cultural life. This included continuing arbitrary and punitive demolitions and forced evictions targeting Muslim communities across multiple states—including explicitly retaliatory demolitions following communal incidents—in defiance of the Supreme Court's November 2024 guidelines; the legal entrenchment of residential segregation through new legislation in Rajasthan and expanded powers in Gujarat restricting Muslim property ownership; an intensified crackdown on Muslim educational institutions, including the abolition of Uttarakhand's Madrasa Board, counter-terrorism scrutiny of approximately 4,000 madrassas in Uttar Pradesh, and the seizure of nearly 300 schools in Jammu and Kashmir; and continuing discrimination against Muslim students in educational institutions across multiple states, including religious segregation in classrooms, restrictions on religious observance, and the use of communal slurs by teachers.

BJP-governed states continue punitive and arbitrary demolitions/evictions targeting Muslims despite Supreme Court restrictions

During the first four months of 2026, authorities across multiple BJP states continued to carry out demolitions and forced evictions that either explicitly punished Muslims accused of wrongdoing or disproportionately impacted Muslim communities. These actions persisted despite the Supreme Court of India's November 2024 judgment, which stayed demolitions lacking prior judicial approval and laid down detailed due-process requirements, including a minimum 15-day advance notice, opportunity for a hearing, and reasoned legal justification.

Demolition drives continued to be framed by authorities as routine enforcement against 'encroachments', 'illegal constructions', or as part of urban redevelopment, wildlife protection, and temple-corridor expansion. In practice, however, these drives continued to be marked by selective application against Muslim communities, often as collective punishment following communal incidents, and by large-scale procedural violations, with severe humanitarian consequences.

Major demolition and eviction drives during the period included:

- Delhi: On 7 January, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, accompanied by riot police and dozens of bulldozers, carried out an overnight demolition drive near the historic Turkman Gate in central Delhi, demolishing structures adjoining a century-old mosque. The operation, officially scheduled for 8am, was initiated at approximately 1:30am. When residents gathered to protest, police fired tear gas—including, according to witnesses, inside residential homes—and carried out baton charges; more than 25 people were detained. Residents said they possessed documents proving lawful possession, and pointed out that a nearby Hindu temple encroaching on road space remained untouched. The demolition proceeded despite the Delhi High Court having issued notice on a legal challenge by the mosque's managing committee and listed the matter for hearing in April.

Separately, on 8 March, the municipal corporation demolished the home of a Muslim family in Uttam Nagar, southwest Delhi, days after a family member was arrested in connection with a killing during a dispute on the Hindu festival of Holi. (See Torture and Ill-Treatment: Non-State Actors) The demolition followed road blockades and arson by Hindu extremist groups Bajrang Dal and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), who had vandalised the accused family's property. No prior notice or hearing was provided. The Delhi High Court halted further demolitions on 11 March after petitions from two affected Muslim families citing the Supreme Court's November 2024 guidelines—but the principal structure had already been razed.

- Uttar Pradesh: In Varanasi, the municipal corporation served notices on more than 30 properties on 31 January, declaring them 'unsafe' and ordering residents to vacate within three days, as part of a ₹224-crore (approximately US$26 million) road-widening project to improve pilgrim access to the Kashi Vishwanath temple complex, a major Hindu holy site. Bulldozers arrived on 9 February, demolishing homes and shops in the predominantly Muslim Dalmandi neighbourhood; one shopkeeper attempted self-immolation and more than 20 people were arrested. The project targeted 180 properties—the majority Muslim-owned—and six mosques. Property owners who received compensation said rates were fixed at 2019 levels, while residential tenants and leaseholders were offered neither compensation nor rehabilitation. In early January, a joint team of district and railway officials in Lucknow demolished approximately 440 huts in the Nirala Nagar and Daliganj areas, displacing residents described by authorities as 'Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi migrants.' On 13 February, authorities in Sambhal district demolished a madrasa and declared approximately ten nearby Muslim homes illegal, ordering

their removal under anti-encroachment provisions; the local village council chairman said he had received no prior notice. (Mosque demolitions were also reported in Uttar Pradesh, and are documented in Religious Freedom.)

- Assam: The BJP-governed state government intensified its long-running forced eviction campaign targeting Bengali-speaking Muslim communities. On 5–6 January, authorities demolished approximately 1,200 homes belonging to Bengali Muslim families across 650 hectares inside the Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary in Sonitpur district, citing alleged encroachment on protected land. Many displaced families said their ancestors had settled in the area decades earlier after losing land to erosion by the Brahmaputra river. The District Commissioner refused to delay the operation despite residents' pleas, citing winter conditions and unharvested crops. On 16 March, authorities demolished around 500 houses in Azara, Kamrup district, on land designated as a tribal belt, displacing mostly Bengali-speaking Muslim families who said they had lived there for nearly two decades after being displaced by floods. The following day, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, at an election rally, promised to reclaim 'every piece of land occupied by illegal Bangladeshis' and threatened to 'gouge out the eyes' of those showing resistance.

- Maharashtra: In Mumbai, the municipal corporation demolished a Muslim family's residential structure and shop in Goregaon on 9 April, days after family members were arrested in connection with a clash during a Hindu religious procession on 5 April. BJP leader Kirit Somaiya visited the site and publicly recited Hindu devotional chants; approximately 400 police were deployed. Residents alleged the demolition selectively targeted the accused Muslim family while other illegal constructions in the vicinity remained untouched.

Also, in opposition-governed Karnataka, the Bangalore Development Authority demolished around 22 more structures in the Thanisandra area of Bengaluru on 8 January without any prior notice to residents—a fact the agency's Commissioner later acknowledged, describing it as a 'prima facie lapse.' Many of those displaced had lived in the area for nearly two decades and possessed valid property registration certificates and utility connections. The demolition followed a larger drive in December 2025 in the nearby Kogilu–Yelahanka area, where authorities had demolished nearly 200 homes in predominantly Muslim migrant settlements, drawing widespread criticism. While the Congress-led state government denied punitive intent and announced limited rehabilitation measures, community leaders described the pattern as a reproduction of demolition practices documented in BJP-governed states.

An investigative series published by Article 14 in January 2026, drawing on data compiled by the Housing and Land Rights Network, documented a 379 per cent rise in forced evictions across India between 2019 and 2023, and found that 89 per cent of those affected were Muslim, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, or Other Backward Class—with Muslims alone constituting 44 per cent of the more than 700,000 people evicted in 2022–2023. The series documented how the Supreme Court's due-process guidelines had proved insufficient to restrain state governments, noting the Court's reluctance to punish repeated defiance and its silence on the discriminatory character of demolitions as critical gaps. It further traced how the demolition model pioneered in Uttar Pradesh under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath —in which bulldozers are deployed as instruments of collective punishment against Muslims—had been replicated across BJP-governed states and, in recent instances, in opposition-governed Karnataka.

In June 2025, a group of UN Special Procedures mandate-holders, including the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, issued a press statement urging the Indian government to halt the continued use of arbitrary and punitive demolitions targeting minorities, low-income households, and migrants. The experts noted that such demolitions constitute aggravated human rights violations, particularly when carried out without due process and in a discriminatory manner, and expressed alarm at the scale of recent demolitions and the use of vague justifications such as "national security" and "illegal immigrants" to bypass legal safeguards. Separately, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing had noted that India is "leading the world in illegal home demolitions, especially affecting minorities and vulnerable groups," characterising the trend as "a national scandal." In February 2026, the Allahabad High Court in Uttar Pradesh, noting that punitive demolitions continued in the state despite the Supreme Court's November 2024 ruling, framed a series of constitutional questions, including whether demolishing a dwelling immediately after the commission of an alleged offence amounts to a 'colourable exercise of executive discretion' in violation of fundamental rights to equality and life. Yet, as the developments documented above demonstrate, authorities across multiple states continue to deploy bulldozers as instruments of collective punishment, with Muslim communities bearing the overwhelming brunt. [The demolition of mosques, madrassas, shrines, and other Muslim religious structures during the period is also documented in the section on Religious Freedom.)

Rajasthan and Gujarat move to legally entrench residential segregation of Muslims

During the period under review, two BJP-governed states advanced legislation that restricts Muslim communities' ability to buy, sell, or occupy property in designated areas—effectively codifying residential segregation under the guise of preventing 'demographic imbalance.'

In January, the Rajasthan state Cabinet approved the draft Rajasthan Prohibition of Transfer of Immovable Property and Provisions for Protection of Tenants from Eviction from Premises in Disturbed Areas Bill, 2026, modelled on Gujarat's Disturbed Areas Act, which has been in force since 1991. The bill empowers the state government to declare localities as 'disturbed areas' based on communal violence, riots, or what the legislation terms 'improper clustering'—defined as the concentration of members of a particular community in a locality leading to 'demographic imbalance' or 'disruption of social harmony.'

All property transactions in designated areas require prior government approval; violations carry penalties of three to five years' imprisonment. The bill was passed by the Rajasthan Legislative Assembly on 6 March despite strong opposition. The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), a leading Indian civil rights organisation, demanded the bill's withdrawal, warning that it would institutionalise residential segregation and violate constitutional guarantees of equality and freedom of movement. PUCL noted that the bill's core concepts of 'improper clustering' and 'demographic imbalance' are the same terms that the Gujarat High Court had already stayed in 2021 when Gujarat attempted to introduce them through amendment. Rajasthan became the second Indian state, after Gujarat, to enact such legislation.

In Gujarat, where the original Disturbed Areas Act has operated for over three decades, the state Assembly on 25 March passed a further amendment significantly expanding the law's scope. The amendment—which renamed 'disturbed areas' as 'specified areas'—grants district collectors the power to take possession of property if a transfer is found 'objectionable,' broadens the definition of 'aggrieved person' to allow any resident of a designated area to challenge a property transaction to which they are not a party, and expands the criteria for area designation to include localities merely 'likely to become prone to disturbance.' Imran Khedawala, the sole Muslim member of the Gujarat Assembly, opposed the amendment, noting that 44 new areas had been added under the Act in recent years despite the BJP government's own claims of having maintained peace in the state for three decades.

An investigation published by Article 14 in February 2026 documented the impact of Gujarat's existing law, finding it in force in at least 18 of the state's 33 districts—including major cities such as Ahmedabad, Surat, Vadodara, and Rajkot. The investigation traced how the Act, originally enacted to prevent distress sales during communal riots, has been repurposed to restrict Muslim property ownership and empower Hindu nationalist vigilante groups to block lawful transactions. Among the cases documented was that of a 15-year-old Muslim girl in Ahmedabad who died by suicide after months of harassment linked to her family's purchase of a neighbouring house; neighbours had invoked the Act to challenge the sale and intimidate the family, while police dismissed the family's complaints by telling them they should not have tried to buy property in a 'disturbed area.' Academic research cited in the investigation found that Ahmedabad's designated disturbed areas expanded by 51 per cent between 2013 and 2019, and described the city as the most segregated in India for Muslims. Another study published in February 2026 by the National Bureau of Economic Research, based on data from 1.5 million Indian neighbourhoods, found that residential segregation of Muslims in Indian cities is comparable in scale to racial segregation in the United States. Twenty-six per cent of India's Muslims live in neighbourhoods that are more than 80 per cent Muslim. The study found that access to public services—including secondary schools, health centres, electricity, and water supply—was systematically worse in segregated Muslim neighbourhoods, and that children growing up in such neighbourhoods obtained approximately two fewer years of education than those in non-marginalised areas.

Crackdown on Muslim educational institutions intensifies across multiple states

During the first four months of 2026, authorities in two BJP-governed states and the centrally administered Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir escalated their campaigns targeting Muslim educational institutions.

In Uttarakhand, where authorities sealed over 200 madrassas in 2025 and enacted the Minority Educational Institutions Bill to dismantle the state's existing madrassa governance framework, the crackdown entered a new phase. In April, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami announced the abolition of the state Madrasa Board, effective July 2026, directing all madrassas to adopt the Uttarakhand Education Board curriculum or face closure. He described the move as a 'historic step' toward modernising education.

In its place, the state formed a new Minority Education Authority with 12 members, of whom only two are Muslim. At a meeting between madrassa representatives and the Minority Welfare Minister in Haridwar in April, operators raised concerns about the requirement to seek approval from both the state education department and the new authority, and about the practical difficulties of aligning madrassa schedules with mainstream school timetables. The Minister offered assurances that the government did not intend to interfere in religious education—but the Chief Minister's own announcement had explicitly warned that non-compliant institutions would be shut down.

In Uttar Pradesh, the state's Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS)—a counter-terrorism law enforcement unit—placed approximately 4,000 madrassas under investigation, examining their funding sources and demanding detailed financial records, including bank account numbers of madrassa managers and, in some districts, of all committee members. The General Secretary of the Teachers' Association Madrasa Arabia in Uttar Pradesh said no madrassa in the state had ever been linked to any terrorism-related incident and described the investigation as creating widespread fear and confusion among staff and communities. Teachers said the repeated scrutiny was disrupting education, with committees forced to spend time responding to official demands rather than running their institutions. Separately, the Allahabad High Court in January questioned a state government order shutting down an unrecognised madrassa, ruling that the absence of official recognition does not authorise closure and only denies eligibility for government grants. The court ordered the seal removed within 24 hours. In a separate case, the High Court directed the state government to resolve disputes over madrassa recognition and withheld teacher salaries within two months, noting that prolonged delay served no meaningful purpose. In the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir—where the Indian government revoked the region's autonomous status in August 2019, downgrading it from a state to a centrally administered territory—authorities in April took over 58 more private schools linked to Jamaat-e-Islami, a religious-political organisation banned under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act in February 2019. The seizures brought the total number of Jamaat-linked schools taken over by the state to nearly 300. Before the ban, Jamaat-e-Islami had operated approximately 350 schools across the region through its educational arm, the Falah-e-Aam Trust, serving an estimated 100,000 students; many of these institutions had formed a significant part of the schooling infrastructure in rural Kashmir. The latest takeover followed the seizure of over 200 schools in August 2025. Videos shared on social media showed armed police, some carrying automatic rifles, surrounding a school in north Kashmir's Langate during the April operation. Although Jammu and Kashmir elected a non-BJP government under the National Conference party in October 2024, policing and public order in the Union Territory remain under the direct control of the centrally appointed Lieutenant Governor, with the Union Ministry of Home Affairs retaining authority over the security apparatus. Authorities maintain that organisations banned over alleged links to militancy cannot operate educational institutions; critics describe the sweeping seizure of schools—many of which served communities for decades—as collective punishment that raises serious questions about due process and the right to education.

Muslim students continue to face discrimination in educational institutions

Discrimination against Muslim students in both private and state-run Indian educational institutions is a long-running and well-documented pattern. Some newly reported cases during the period under review continued to illustrate its persistence.

In Madhya Pradesh, an investigation by Maktoob Media in February revealed that a private school in Indore had segregated Muslim students into separate classroom sections labelled ‘M’ and held two separate annual day functions—one for Muslim students and one for non-Muslim students. Parents described significant disparities between the two events: the Muslim students’ function lasted approximately two hours with no chief guest and minimal teacher coordination, while the non-Muslim function ran for three to four hours with structured performances and refreshments. Parents wearing visibly Muslim attire were reportedly denied entry to the non-Muslim event.

In Andhra Pradesh, Kashmiri Muslim nursing students at the Government College of Nursing in Kurnool district alleged religious discrimination during Ramadan, reporting that college authorities refused to facilitate basic arrangements for fasting and attempted to restrict the wearing of hijab. Students said they were told that if religion was so important to them, they should not have chosen the college. The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association said students had also been called ‘terrorists’ because of their regional identity, and that those who raised concerns were threatened with suspension. In Bengaluru, a professor at PES University was suspended in March after a video emerged of him referring to a Muslim student as a ‘terrorist’ at least 13 times during a classroom session attended by approximately 60 students, while also telling the student that the Iran war was caused by ‘people like you.’ The university suspended the professor pending inquiry; police did not register a formal case.

10. CIVIC SPACE AND DEMOCRATIC BACKLIDING

Multiple international assessments published during the reporting period registered India's continued democratic decline. The V-Dem Democracy Report 2026 classified India as an "electoral autocracy"—a designation it has held since 2017—ranking it 105 out of 179 on the Liberal Democracy Index, down five places from the previous year. Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2026 scored India 62 out of 100 ("Partly Free"), a 14-point decline since 2005. The Reporters Without Borders (RSF) World Press Freedom Index dropped India six places to 157 out of 180 in the "very serious" category. CIVICUS retained India's "Repressed" rating (30/100) in its January 2026 update. These assessments capture trends through 2025. The more recent developments listed below suggest the trajectory has not reversed:

- **Continuing targeting of journalists**: India's RSF ranking of 157/180 was driven in part by intensifying harassment of independent media. During the period, police in Srinagar summoned at least two Kashmir-based journalists to the Cyber Police Station in mid-January in connection with routine reporting on a police exercise to profile mosques, and attempted to compel one of them to sign a "peace bond"; the Magistrate rejected the request. In West Bengal, at least four journalists were assaulted by mobs while covering protests in Murshidabad district on 16–17 January, including a cameraman hospitalised with head injuries; another journalist was assaulted on camera in Howrah on 25 February after questioning a ruling-party (TMC) lawmaker.

- **Escalating restrictions on digital expression and online censorship:** On 10 February, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) notified amended IT Intermediary Rules effective 20 February, imposing a three-hour takedown window on social media platforms for content deemed unlawful—a timeframe the Internet Freedom Foundation (IFF), a digital rights watchdog, called incompatible with proportionality requirements. On 31 March, MeitY published draft Second Amendment Rules extending the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting's content-oversight powers from registered publishers to ordinary users posting "news and current affairs" content. In parallel, a MediaNama investigation documented over 40 instances of geo-blocking, account withholding, or content takedowns on X (formerly Twitter) in March 2026 alone—targeting journalists, satirists, fact-checkers, and ordinary users critical of the Prime Minister. X wrote to MeitY on 19 March stating that blocking orders were "excessively and disproportionately" restricting users' rights; MeitY responded that content "demeaning" the Prime Minister "without any substance" posed a threat to public order.

The US Trade Representative's 2026 National Trade Estimate Report separately flagged India's takedown protocols as "politically motivated." Access Now's annual report, released 31 March, recorded 65 internet shutdowns in India in 2025—the highest among democracies. Within the current reporting period, shutdowns were reportedly imposed in Kokrajhar, Assam (20 January), five districts of Manipur (7–14 April), and Ramban, Jammu and Kashmir (13 April).

- **Continuing restrictions on civil society, protest, and association**: On 25 March, the government introduced the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the lower house of Parliament, which would empower a new "Designated Authority" to seize and dispose of the assets of non-governmental organisations whose foreign-funding licences are cancelled—with retrospective effect. Amnesty International noted that 21,933 organisations had already lost their FCRA licences as of March 2026. On 26 February, Delhi Police lathi-charged students of Jawaharlal Nehru University attempting to march to the Ministry of Education; around 51 were detained and 14 arrested, including the elected student union president and joint secretary, before a local court ordered their release. In Noida, Uttar Pradesh, thousands of factory workers protested wage conditions from 10–14 April; police responded with tear gas and lathi-charges, arrested approximately 400, and detained trade union leaders. In Odisha's Rayagada district, police conducted a pre-dawn raid on Adivasi and Dalit villagers opposing a Vedanta bauxite mining project on 7 April—cutting electricity, carrying out lathi-charges, and injuring approximately 70 people; at least 40 were arrested, with courts ordering at least eight to clean police stations as a bail condition in what activists described as a casteist judicial response. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was released on 15 March after six months of National Security Act detention over his participation in protests calling for statehood (within the Indian Union) for Ladakh.

- **Restrictions on academic and cultural expression**: On 25 February, the Supreme Court ordered the nationwide seizure of all physical and digital copies of a newly published Class 8 social science textbook by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, a government body), citing a chapter on judicial corruption as a "deep-rooted conspiracy to malign the judiciary." The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC, India's film censorship authority) blocked the release of the Oscar-nominated documentary The Voice of Hind Rajab—on the killing of a five-year-old Palestinian girl by Israeli forces—with the distributor apparently told by a Board member that the film's release "would break up the India-Israel relationship."

- **Rollback of transgender rights**: Parliament passed the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026 on 25 March, receiving presidential assent on 30 March. The legislation strips the right to self-identification of gender— previously recognised by the Supreme Court in a 2014—restricts the definition of "transgender" to three narrow categories, and mandates verification by state medical boards before identity certificates can be issued. It further introduces penalties of up to life imprisonment for "coercing or alluring" a person to assume a transgender identity, which the People's Union for Civil Liberties warned could criminalise support systems of transgender persons.

Amnesty International called it “a major step backward for human rights”; Human Rights Watch described it as “a huge setback” that “strips thousands of their rights.” The OHCHR warned that the legislation would have “far-reaching impacts.”

11. LACK OF EFFECTIVE REMEDY

The violations documented across this edition reveal a pattern of remedy failure that is structural rather than incidental. At every stage of the accountability process—from initial access to justice through to independent oversight—Muslim victims confronted barriers that rendered domestic remedies largely ineffective. Complaints were refused, distorted, or turned against the victims themselves. Investigations were conducted by the same agencies implicated in the violations. Courts delivered moments of institutional courage at the lower levels, only for these to be undermined by transfers, executive defiance, or retreat at the apex. Reparation—including for those wrongfully expelled from the country, dispossessed of their homes, or subjected to years of pre-trial detention—remained largely absent. And the oversight bodies tasked with monitoring compliance either failed to act or actively pursued agendas unrelated to their mandate. The reporting period also brought fresh developments in cases arising from the targeted violence against Muslims in Muzaffarnagar in 2013 and in Delhi in 2020 that underscore the continuing absence of remedy for past violations.

The following assessment is organised around the five core elements of the right to effective remedy under international law:

1.Access to justice: Effective remedy begins with the ability to file a complaint and have it acted upon without discrimination, intimidation, or inversion. Across the incidents documented in this edition, Muslim victims repeatedly encountered a system in which the first point of contact—the police station—functioned not as a gateway to justice but as a barrier to it.

In multiple cases, first information reports (FIRs) either omitted the core offence or were filed against the victims rather than the perpetrators. In the Balasore cow vigilante lynching (14 January), when a 35-year-old Muslim man was beaten to death by cow vigilantes who forced him to chant Hindu slogans before killing him, the initial FIR booked the van's driver and owner under Odisha's cow slaughter prevention law and described the incident as a vehicle overturning—making no mention of the mob attack that killed the victim. A murder FIR was registered only after the victim's family filed a separate complaint. (See section on Deprivation of Life.) Similarly, in Dhenkanal, Odisha (4 January), where a Christian pastor was assaulted, forced to consume cow dung, and paraded while forced to chant Hindu slogans, police filed the FIR against the pastor rather than his attackers; nine suspects were arrested only after more than two weeks. (See section on Torture and Ill-Treatment.) In other cases, victims who attempted to access the system faced active criminalisation. In Uttarakhand, a Hindu man who expressed solidarity with Muslims after a mob attack by Hindu extremists was himself targeted: police registered a case against him based on the mob's complaint, and the High Court refused to quash the FIR (20 March), denied him police protection, and imposed a social media gag order—while the man who announced a ₹2 lakh (~$2,400) bounty for his killing was detained but not prosecuted. (See section on Advocacy of Religious Hatred.)

The forced expulsion campaign active in Assam provided another example of brazen denial of access to justice. In a May 2026 interview, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma described the methods followed by authorities openly: the Border Security Force holds individuals for 10 to 40 days, identifies border stretches where Bangladeshi guards are absent, and 'pushes' them across at night. No individualised assessment of nationality, legal representation, or opportunity to challenge the expulsion is available at any stage—over a hundred Indian citizens, including a 14-member family from Odisha holding Aadhaar and voter cards, were pushed across the border multiple times under this system. (See section on Forced Expulsions and Refoulement.)

A four-part study published by Article 14 in February 2026 documented the weaponisation of India's anti-terror law (UAPA) against Muslims in Karnataka. Of 925 persons accused under UAPA in the state over two decades, 783—nearly 85 per cent—were Muslim. Nearly eight in ten were charged during the BJP's 10.5 years in power. The law's bail provisions effectively invert the presumption of innocence, requiring the accused to disprove the state's case rather than the state proving it—rendering access to justice illusory from the moment of arrest.

2. Effective, impartial investigations: The right to remedy requires that investigations into alleged violations be conducted promptly, independently, and impartially. Where the agency under investigation is the same agency conducting the inquiry—or where police have institutional incentives to minimise wrongdoing—the investigation ceases to function as a pathway to accountability and instead becomes a mechanism for its avoidance.

In several cases documented in this edition, police were left to investigate deaths for which they bore direct or indirect responsibility. In Delhi, a 34-year-old Muslim man died in police custody at Jahangirpuri police station (20 April); police attributed the death to dehydration, while his family alleged he had been beaten to death. No independent or judicial investigation was initiated. In Ganderbal, Kashmir (1 April), a 28-year-old man was killed in an army operation described as an 'encounter'; his family insisted he was a civilian with no militant links and demanded an independent probe—none was ordered. (See sections on Deprivation of Life and Torture and Ill-Treatment.)

Where police were not themselves the perpetrators, their investigations nonetheless operated to shield those responsible. In Bhiwadi, Rajasthan (2 March), a young Muslim man was shot dead by cow vigilantes; police initially attributed the death to stone-pelting, a claim contradicted when the post-mortem recovered a bullet from the victim's head. No arrests were made for 14 days—the family itself traced the accused. In Jharkhand (15 January), police recorded the death of Alauddin Sheikh as a suspected suicide by hanging; the family alleged murder and staging of the scene. No indication emerged that police meaningfully pursued the family's account.

The consequences of such investigative failures were visible in the courtroom. During the reporting period, a Delhi court acquitted 11 Hindu men charged in connection with the targeted violence against Muslims in Delhi in 2020, finding the police chargesheet "fabricated" and the investigation fundamentally deficient. In a separate set of cases, courts acquitted a further 19 accused across three cases—including 37 acquitted in Muzaffarnagar after 13 years and 17 acquitted in a 2023 Chhattisgarh mob lynching—with courts repeatedly citing the prosecution's failure to present evidence. In each instance, the acquittal likely reflected not the innocence of the accused but the refusal of investigating agencies to build a case against them.

The pattern extended to active police complicity with perpetrators. In Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh (8 March), a 60-year-old Muslim man reported a dispute with Hindu neighbours who had a history of provoking his family; police instead detained him, allegedly accepted bribes from the accused's side, and beat him in custody. He was shot dead by the accused shortly after his release. In Rohtas, Bihar (24 March), Hasan Raza Khan was lynched in public view on video; despite this evidence, only four of eight accused were arrested. The family reported threats from those at large, and the person who recorded the video was also threatened. Khan's wife subsequently consumed poison along with their two children and died. (See sections on Deprivation of Life and Torture and Ill-Treatment.)

3. Fair, independent prosecutions and judicial processes: The right to remedy depends not only on the investigation that precedes a trial but on the independence and fairness of the judicial process itself. During the reporting period, lower courts in several states demonstrated institutional courage—only for these interventions to be neutralised by transfers, executive defiance, appellate retreat, or the Supreme Court's own refusal to engage.

The most sustained judicial pushback came from judges at the Allahabad High Court, which has jurisdiction over Uttar Pradesh. In January 2026, Justice Arun Kumar Singh Deshwal issued strict guidelines against Uttar Pradesh's 'encounter culture'—the practice, colloquially known as 'half encounters' or 'Operation Langda,' of police shooting accused persons in the leg to earn promotions—making FIR registration mandatory after every encounter, prohibiting instant rewards, and threatening district police chiefs with contempt if Supreme Court guidelines were violated. In February, another bench comprising Justices Atul Sreedharan and Siddharth Nandan flagged the continuation of 'bulldozer justice' despite Supreme Court guidelines, questioning whether demolishing structures immediately after alleged offences constituted a 'colourable exercise of executive discretion.' Another judge, Justice Subhash Vidyarthi, struck down the closure of an unrecognised madrassa, ruling that non-recognition does not authorise closure. In a split verdict, Justice Sreedharan openly called out the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)'s silence on lynching cases as a dereliction of its mandate. In Sambhal, a Chief Judicial Magistrate ordered the police to register an FIR against Circle Officer Anuj Chaudhary—personally named by a witness as having shot at Muslim protesters during the November 2024 mosque survey violence that left five dead—and other police personnel.

These interventions were systematically neutralised. The Sambhal CJM was transferred out of the district within days of his order, followed by another bench of the Allahabad High Court staying his FIR direction. Chaudhary himself was promoted to Additional Superintendent of Police late last year.

At the apex, the Supreme Court retreated from accountability for anti-Muslim hate speech. On 16 February, a bench led by CJI Surya Kant declined to entertain petitions seeking an SIT probe into Assam CM Sarma's anti-Muslim rhetoric, directing petitioners to the Gauhati High Court instead. On 29 April, the Court dismissed the case against former Union Minister Anurag Thakur and BJP leader Parvesh Verma over their 2020 rally chant of "desh ke gaddaron ko… goli maaro saalon ko" (shoot dead the traitors to the nation)—holding it disclosed no cognizable offence.

The Court also dismissed an application seeking the implementation of its own Tehseen Poonawala hate crime prevention framework as involving "unmanageable" directions, effectively abandoning its own previous initiatives. And in perhaps its most consequential act of judicial inaction, the Court left its judgment in ADR v ECI—the challenge to the mass voter roll purges heard over 29 days and reserved in January 2026—undelivered, as four states—including West Bengal—and one Union Territory went to polls on purged rolls. (See sections on Advocacy of Religious Hatred and Disenfranchisement and Denationalisation.)

The pattern of impunity for the 2020 targeted violence against Muslims in Delhi crystallised across every level of the judiciary. On 13 March, a Delhi magistrate ruled it "legally impermissible" to register an FIR against BJP leader Kapil Mishra—now Delhi's tourism minister—for his role in inciting the violence. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on 5 January denied bail to student leaders Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam (both now detained over five years under UAPA), holding their continued detention "not yet constitutionally impermissible" and barring them from reapplying for one year. Seven accused remain in jail—while, as documented in the preceding section, perpetrators of the same violence were acquitted after police submitted fabricated chargesheets. The inciter is a minister; the accused who shot people walk free; the Muslim activists falsely accused of 'conspiracy' remain locked up. (See section on Arrests and Detentions.)

4. Adequate reparation: Under international law, victims of human rights violations are entitled to restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and guarantees of non-repetition. For the violations documented in this edition, reparation was almost entirely absent—and in several cases, the state actively obstructed victims' attempts to recover what had been taken from them.

The wrongful expulsion of Indian citizens into Bangladesh represented a stark example of continued denial of restitution. As documented in the section on Forced Expulsions, the state's pushback pipeline offered no mechanism for their return. In a report published in January, Taher Ali, declared a 'foreigner' by an Assam tribunal, described how he was pushed into Bangladesh three times—Bangladesh returned him each time, but no Indian authority took accountability for the wrongful expulsion or offered compensation. A 14-member family from Odisha was pushed across four times despite holding citizenship documents; the BSF reportedly threatened to "open fire" if they returned. Sunali Khatun, a pregnant woman whose family held land records going back five generations and whose parents appeared on electoral rolls since 2002, required Supreme Court intervention merely to return—no accountability for the wrongful expulsion has followed. Most strikingly, six persons from Birbhum whom a Bangladeshi court itself declared to be Indian citizens remained stranded in Bangladesh as of April 2026: the central government challenged the Calcutta High Court's repatriation order in the Supreme Court rather than comply, actively litigating against its own citizens' right to return. The Supreme Court gave the Centre a "last chance" to clarify its position on 24 April—but no resolution was reached during the reporting period.

In Manipur, the total absence of reparation for mass violence against the Kuki-Zo community entered its third year. Despite over 260 people killed and more than 58,000 displaced since May 2023, no conviction has been secured for any conflict-related offence. In the case relating to two Kuki-Zo women who were stripped, paraded naked, and sexually assaulted by a Meitei mob—and a video of the incident went viral—a special CBI court framed charges only in January 2026, two and a half years after the crime; two of the accused had been released on bail, prompting the CBI itself to petition the Supreme Court for cancellation. In a separate case, a Kuki-Zo woman who was abducted and gang-raped during the May 2023 violence died in January 2026 without a single perpetrator having been identified, let alone prosecuted.

The only documented instance of judicial compensation during the reporting period was a Patna High Court order awarding ₹5 lakh (~ USD 5200) to a Muslim minor from Saharsa, Bihar, who had been unlawfully detained for over two months—a sum that, while welcome, underscores how exceptional any form of reparation remains.

5. Independent oversight: The right to effective remedy presupposes the existence of independent oversight bodies capable of monitoring state compliance and intervening where violations occur. India's NHRC—a key body mandated to perform this function—demonstrated during the reporting period not merely a failure to act but an active misalignment between its priorities and the patterns of violations documented in this report.

The Allahabad High Court's split verdict noted earlier arose from a petition challenging an NHRC directive ordering the Economic Offences Wing to investigate 558 government-aided madrasas in Uttar Pradesh. While hearing the challenge, Justice Sreedharan observed that he was "astounded" by the Commission's decision to pursue madrassa finances while the same body had never taken suo motu cognisance of the lynching of Muslims, the harassment of interfaith couples, or the persecution of those who "even having a cup of coffee at a public place with a person of different religion becomes a fearful act." The NHRC's selective attention extended further: Commission member Priyank Kanoongo—a former chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, with a documented RSS and BJP background—was simultaneously issuing sweeping notices to gymnasiums across multiple states based on the 'love jihad' conspiracy narrative, investigating whether Muslim gym owners were luring Hindu women. The contrast is instructive: an oversight body that finds no occasion to act on lynching, custodial death, or forced expulsion is now devoting institutional resources to investigate an unfounded, debunked Islamophobic conspiracy theory.

The NHRC's credibility deficit is now the subject of formal international proceedings. In April 2025, GANHRI's Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) recommended downgrading the NHRC's accreditation from 'A' to 'B' status—finding it only partially compliant with the Paris Principles. The NHRC challenged the recommendation; in December 2025, the GANHRI Bureau rejected the challenge and referred the Commission back to the SCA for review. The final decision on whe-

-ther to formally downgrade India's national human rights institution—a step that would restrict its participation in UN Human Rights Council proceedings—was originally scheduled for April 2026 but has been deferred to November 2026 to allow the NHRC additional time to demonstrate compliance.

The reporting period also provided further confirmation that impunity in India does not merely denote the absence of punishment, but also often functions as a pathway to political reward and recognition:

- On 5 March, the Rajasthan High Court granted bail to Monu Manesar—a cow vigilante leader accused of conspiracy in the abduction and murder of Nasir (25) and Junaid (35) from Bharatpur, Rajasthan, whose charred bodies were recovered from inside a burnt vehicle in Bhiwani, Haryana in February 2023—noting that not one of 74 prosecution witnesses had been examined in over two years. Upon release, Manesar was escorted home in a bulletproof jacket to garlands, drum beats, and firecrackers by supporters.

- In Jalna, Maharashtra, Shrikant Pangarkar—an accused in the 2017 assassination of journalist Gauri Lankesh, released on bail in September 2024—won a municipal corporation election on 16 January; the ruling Shiv Sena—a BJP ally—did not field a candidate against him.

- The trajectory from violence to political office is perhaps most brazen in Delhi: Kapil Mishra, whose ultimatum preceded the 2020 targeted violence against Muslims that killed 53 people—and against whom in March a court ruled it "legally impermissible" to register an FIR—now serves as Delhi's cabinet minister for tourism, art, culture, and law; Parvesh Verma, whose "goli maaro saalon ko" (shoot the traitors) chants the Supreme Court in April found disclosed no cognisable offence, is now Delhi's Deputy Chief Minister, while Anurag Thakur, another accused in the same case, remains a Member of Parliament.

In their report examining alleged violations of international law against Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and Assam, published in March 2026, the Panel of Independent International Experts (PIIE)—a group of prominent jurists and investigators—had concluded that "in both states, the remedial framework appears to be largely ineffective for Muslims, particularly in relation to serious violations, and individuals affected have no realistic prospect of securing justice through existing domestic mechanisms." The evidence documented across this edition suggests that this conclusion increasingly applies nationally.

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